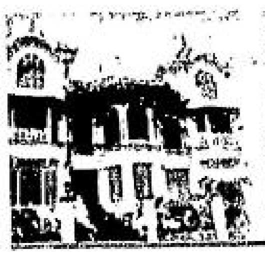

■ **LIFESTYLE / C1**

Viaje del Sol, sunny tour of Filipino heritage

■ **BUSINESS / B8**

Strong peso, weak peso; wherefore art thou, Amando?

■ **ACROSS / A17**

Cargo vessels collide off Cebu port; 17,000 bags of rice sink

■ **ENTERTAINMENT / A2-1**

2006 Metro Manila Film Festival targets half a billion pesos

CD shows House break-in, 'theft' of election returns

By Gerry Lirio

THE WALLS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES have eyes and ears. Some pairs belong to security officers who took footage of an alleged break-in at a room in the House where ballot boxes containing election returns of the 2004 presidential election had been kept.

If these security officers, some of them active

CD SHOWS/ A9

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, March 13, 2006 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 95 P18 website: www.inq7.net

'Kuya' Joe postpones eviction of 'Housemates'

By Michael Lim Ubac

BASKING IN HIS NEW-found role as "Big Brother," Speaker Jose de Venecia now wants to continue looking after the five militant lawmakers-turned-"Housemates" who are facing rebellion

KUYA JOE/ A6

ABANGAN ANG SUSUNOD NA EPISODE!

Residual threats remain, says GMA

But military warns PDI of reports on restiveness

By Luige A. del Puerto and Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo yesterday said she was battling "residual" threats against herself, and the military warned the INQUIRER against publishing articles about alleged attempts by "puppet masters" to divide the Armed Forces in a bid to unseat her.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines reacted vigorously to a series of reports in the INQUIRER that purportedly showed, among other things, that the aborted Feb. 24 putsch involved a plan to replace Ms Arroyo with a caretaker government to be headed by Gen. Generoso Senga, the AFP chief of staff.

Col. Tristan Kison, AFP spokesperson, said the INQUIRER articles were "without basis" and were part of the plot by "unseen hands and puppet masters" to divide the military in an attempt to oust Ms Arroyo.

Kison said the military was considering filing appropriate charges against the INQUIRER.

"It will be up to the lawyer. I cannot tell yet," he said. "If it's libel, if the lawyer thinks inciting to sedition, that is what will be written (in the charge sheet)."

Conceding that destabilization attempts were not over, however, Ms Arroyo ordered the police and military to "expose all residual and anticipated threats" against her.

"We're one step ahead of the enemies of the state," the President said in a statement issued amid continuing news reports of possible attempts to topple her and her administration's equally strong moves against dissenters. *(See related story in Across the Nation, Page A21.)*

RESIDUAL/ A22

Now it can be told: Esperon was the 'key'

By Fe Zamora

A SHOOTING WAR BETWEEN THE group that planned to withdraw support from President Macapagal-Arroyo and the military faction loyal to her would have pitted elite units against each other.

On one side—according to officers interviewed by the INQUIRER—were the Philippine Marines under Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda and Col. Ariel Querubin, the Scout Rangers under Brig. Gen Danilo Lim, and the police Special Action Force under Chief Supt. Marcelo Franco.

On the other side were Army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., the Special Operations Command (Socom) and the Special Forces Regiment under Col. Arturo Ortiz, beefed up by troops under Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan of the 7th Infantry Division, and all the military assets in the Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) under Lt. Gen. Romeo Tolentino.

In the middle stood AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga, balancing the forces and the events precariously.

In the end, it was Esperon's preemptive moves that tilted the balance in Ms Arroyo's favor.

One officer said the two factions,

NOW IT CAN/ A23

Riding AFP tail, ending up in its jaws

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

THE TWO-PART SERIES OF ARTICLES by Tony Bergonia and Fe Zamora run by the INQUIRER on March 11 and 12 reconstructs the events leading up to the Feb. 24 coup plot and explains how and why the plot failed.

The series was a product of no-frills and unpretentious enterprise reporting, not one churned out by corporate-funded investigative journalism.

It was a useful reporting effort whose publication was timely because it came in the wake of a widening Armed Forces crackdown on some of its members implicated in the plot that the Arroyo administration claimed it had nipped in the bud, triggering the proclamation of a state of national emergency.

The value of the series was that it not

RIDING/ A22

INFANTA Bishop Julio Xavier Labayen (left) celebrates Mass for sacked Army Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim (second from right) in his custodial house in Fort Bonifacio. With them are lawyer Fred Bentulan, Jose Albert, Hero Vaswani of the Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya, Lim's wife Aloy and daughter Aika. CHRISTIAN V. ESGUERRA

2 bishops back sacked Army general

By Christian V. Esguerra

FRIENDS AND PRELATES HAVE JOINED comrades-in-arms of Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim in expressing support for the commander of the Scout Ranger regiment who was sacked in the wake of a failed attempt to unseat President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Since the eve of the alleged plot to oust Ms Arroyo on Feb. 24, Lim has been confined to a modest two-story house in the Fort Bonifacio area for military officers, where he has been receiving a steady stream of visitors.

On Sunday, two outspoken bishops—Julio Xavier Labayen and Antonio Tobias—were among several dozen people who attended Mass in the small sala of Lim's quarters, and later had lunch of grilled pork, tilapia and other native dishes in his narrow patio adorned with orchids.

On Saturday, fellow graduates of the US Military Academy at West Point dropped by at lunch.

"I'm overwhelmed," Lim told the INQUIRER. "This means a lot to me and my family, to be visited by the bishops and get their support."

2 BISHOPS/ A23

Shock, dismay over death of 'Balkans butcher'

AN ETHNIC Albanian woman feeds her baby as she and 2,000 other refugees walk up a muddy track after they were allowed to enter Macedonia from Kosovo in this photo taken on March 30, 1999, during the reign of Slobodan Milosevic. REUTERS

THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS—SUPPORTers voiced suspicion while victims expressed dismay over the death of Slobodan Milosevic, the 64-year-old former Yugoslav leader branded by the West as "the butcher of the Balkans."

Milosevic, who had been suffering from cardiovascular problems and high blood pressure, was found dead Saturday in his bed at a UN prison near The Hague, where he had been standing trial for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity stemming from atrocities in the 1990s.

A guard at the UN tribunal jail in a suburb of The Hague discovered Milosevic's body between 9 and 10 a.m. on Saturday. An autopsy, however, will be conducted Sunday by Dutch authorities—with a pathologist from Serbia-Montenegro in attendance—to determine the exact cause of death.

A UN tribunal spokesperson said there was "no sign that he committed suicide," but added: "We cannot say that he died of natural causes. We are waiting for the report."

But Milosevic's family and his political allies raised suspicions about the death of the former Serb strongman and said the UN court should be held responsible. *(See related story in The World, Page A28.)*

"The Hague tribunal has killed my husband," Milosevic's wife Mirjana Markovic was quoted by CNN as saying from Moscow. The tribunal's judges last month denied a request from Milosevic to undergo medical treatment in Moscow.

Serbian newspapers on Sunday also accused the The Hague-based tribunal of "murder." Zdenko

SHOCK/ A6

MILOSEVIC: No sign he committed suicide, said a UN official, who added: "We can't say he died of natural causes." AP

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CYRIL L. BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/03/13/06

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

Second FRONTPAGE

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Palace on Noli's call: It's time to move on

By Christine O. Avendaño and TJ Burgonio

MUST WE BRING UP "HELLO GARCI" ALL OVER again?

Lurching from one crisis to another, Malacañang hardly welcomed yesterday Vice President Noli de Castro's statement that it was time for President Macapagal-Arroyo to clear the air on the scandal that has been rocking the administration the past nine months.

"We respect the views of the Vice President on this issue but we believe President Arroyo has already done her part to address it," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in reaction to De Castro's call made on Saturday.

Bunye pointed out that investigations had been conducted in the Senate and the House into the allegations Ms Arroyo's voice was the one recorded on wiretapped phone conversations with ex-poll commissioner Virgilio Garcillano and that this was evidence that she had ordered the rigging of the 2004 presidential elections.

The inquiries, Bunye added, included one which heard and subsequently dismissed an impeachment complaint against the President.

"We have gone through the whole slew of legislative inquiries, impeachment proceedings and media controversies impinging on this matter. Perhaps it is time to put it to rest," Bunye said.

But also-ran opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson maintained yesterday that no "closure" had been reached on the matter, as he urged the President to heed De Castro's advice.

"She must find a way to explain, and whether or not that's convincing, should show compunction or remorse," he said, stressing that Ms Arroyo should not expect the people to easily forget the election issue between now and 2010, when her term expires.

"Whether or not her explanation is convincing, there must be closure," he said.

In backing De Castro's call, Lacson said, "The President should take this seriously at this time, especially because this is coming from her long-time ally, who has been very timid and careful in asking her to do this thing."

"She should now reflect [on the matter]," the senator added.

Following the disclosure of the "Hello Garci" tapes in June last year, President Arroyo apologized to the nation for talking to an election official she did not identify. The President also denied having rigged the election.

But the apology failed to stem the political storm, which became even more turbulent.

ARROYO

Almost half of her Cabinet, tagged the "Hyatt 10," resigned in spectacular fashion shortly. The political opposition, later on joined by her allies, including former President Corazon Aquino and Senate President Franklin Drilon, called for Ms Arroyo to step down.

The Vice President, being the constitutional successor, was ready to take over the presidency if Ms Arroyo stepped down midway through her term, his allies in the Senate had told reporters.

Two weeks ago, Ms Arroyo was confronted with a coup plot and is now grappling with its aftermath.

Lacson said the President couldn't go on ignoring an "issue of national interest" by resorting to palliatives such as Executive Order No. 464, Proclamation No. 1017 and Charter change.

The President issued PP 1017 and placed the country under a state of emergency on Feb. 24 after the military uncovered a plan by key officers to join street protests that day and withdraw support from her. The emergency decree was lifted a week later.

This came nearly five months after she issued EO 464, which bars administration, police and military officials from appearing in congressional hearings without her consent.

Ms Arroyo's election lawyer, Romy Macalintal, maintained there was no irregularity in the 2004 presidential and vice presidential elections.

"The best evidence to prove there was no irregularity is the current results in the recount of votes in the vice presidential election," Macalintal said in a phone interview.

The Presidential Election Tribunal is currently recounting the votes in the vice presidential race between De Castro and former Sen. Loren Legarda, who filed an election protest.

The PET has opened 4,000 of more than 7,000 election returns in Cebu. Despite this, Macalintal pointed out, no irregularity had been found.

And since the election returns and ballots used here were the same as those in the presidential race, Macalintal said, this would reflect that no irregularity in the presidential race took place.

International
FREE
Rep. Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltran
AGAIN TO MARTIAL LAW!

FREE KA BEL

More than 100 Filipinos marched in downtown Hong Kong yesterday demanding the release of Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran who was arrested on suspicion of playing a role in plots to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo. The protesters said the arrest "gravely violates his fundamental human and political rights" and exposes "the government's lack of respect for human rights." ***(Related story on Page A3)*** REUTERS

Lacson confirms offers to join transition body

By TJ Burgonio

OPPOSITION SEN. PANFILO Lacson yesterday confirmed he was asked to be part of the transition council that would have run the government immediately after President Macapagal-Arroyo was ousted from power.

But Lacson said that he rebuffed the offers which were made by four separate groups, including one from the military.

"It's true I was approached by certain groups interested in ousting GMA to be part of a transition council, but I declined," he said in an interview.

According to Lacson, the groups from different sectors made the overtures between late October last year and early February this year. The last offer was for him to head the council, he said.

Lacson, who ran a well-oiled presidential campaign but lost to Ms Arroyo in the 2004 elections, said he consistently rejected the overtures because, in his view, such a council was "doomed to fail."

"In my book, it will fail. I don't want to be part of a failing group. That's what I told them," he said.

With its members coming from a broad spectrum of society, the council would be locked up in debates on individual concerns rather than focused on gut issues like reforms in government, Lacson recalled telling the groups.

"I argued that a council running the government would simply not work. It would not be better than a debating club continuously arguing on how to resolve even the most minor issues," he said.

The council, to be composed of 15 members at most, was supposed to rule for "1,000 days" or shorter, the senator said, quoting the groups' proposals.

INQUIRER sources earlier disclosed that Lacson was among the personalities considered to be part of a transition government after Ms Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro shall have been toppled and until snap elections were called.

The others were AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga, former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, former Sen. Gregorio Honasan, defeated presidential candidate Bro. Eddie Villanueva and former Executive Secretary Renato de Villa.

The formation of the council was supposed to follow the planned withdrawal of support from the administration by key military officials on Feb. 24 and the subsequent resignation of Ms Arroyo and De Castro.

'Why the arms if coup meant to be peaceful?'

By Michael Lim Ubac

IF YOU'RE TALKING BENEVOLENT coup, what was the firepower for?

The administration's staunchest defender in the House of Representatives yesterday branded as deceitful the claim of rebellious senior military officers that they had in mind a "benevolent military takeover" if they succeeded in ousting President Macapagal-Arroyo two weeks ago.

Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr., vice chair of the House defense committee, described the claim as the "conspirators' sales pitch" and "a non-sequitur," or fallacious.

Confirming that the military officers were planning to march to Edsa with their rifles and weapons on Feb. 24, Pichay asked: "If they were not preparing for violence and bloodshed, what were they bringing their weapons for—to direct traffic?"

Pichay tried to downplay accusations that the administration was now disregarding civil liberties. Had the coup plotters succeeded in putting up a junta, he said, the "people would not be experiencing even one-tenth of the freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution which they now have."

The lawmaker also dismissed as "disinformation" claims that Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga had been involved in the coup plot. He said the "tale" was being peddled to the media as part of the mutineers' "obvious attempt to sanitize their nefarious plot to seize power."

He lashed out at Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, saying that the former military man should not in any way justify the officers' illegal and irresponsible actions. "The bottom line is that they plotted to overthrow the country's democracy, and the plotters and their political masters should be meted out justice."

Davao del Sur Rep. Douglas Cagas, head of the House contingent in the Electoral Tribunal, also assailed Biazon, accusing him of "glorifying military adventurists" and trying to muddle the military investigation into the coup plot.

He said that Biazon, as a senator and former AFP chief of staff, should know better than to "try again unleashing the military Pandora's box" on the country by coddling the plotters.

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Ka Bel seeks his return to Congress

ANAKPAWIS REP. CRISPIN "KA BEL" Beltran, who is in police custody on a rebellion charge, wants to attend Congress sessions starting today.

Beltran formally asked Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao to be allowed to attend the plenary hearings at the House of Representatives from March 13 to 15 even "under police custody," so he could participate in the budget deliberations.

Beltran said he could help argue for the passage of the PNP budget which had been held back in the wake of the warrantless arrest of militant legislators.

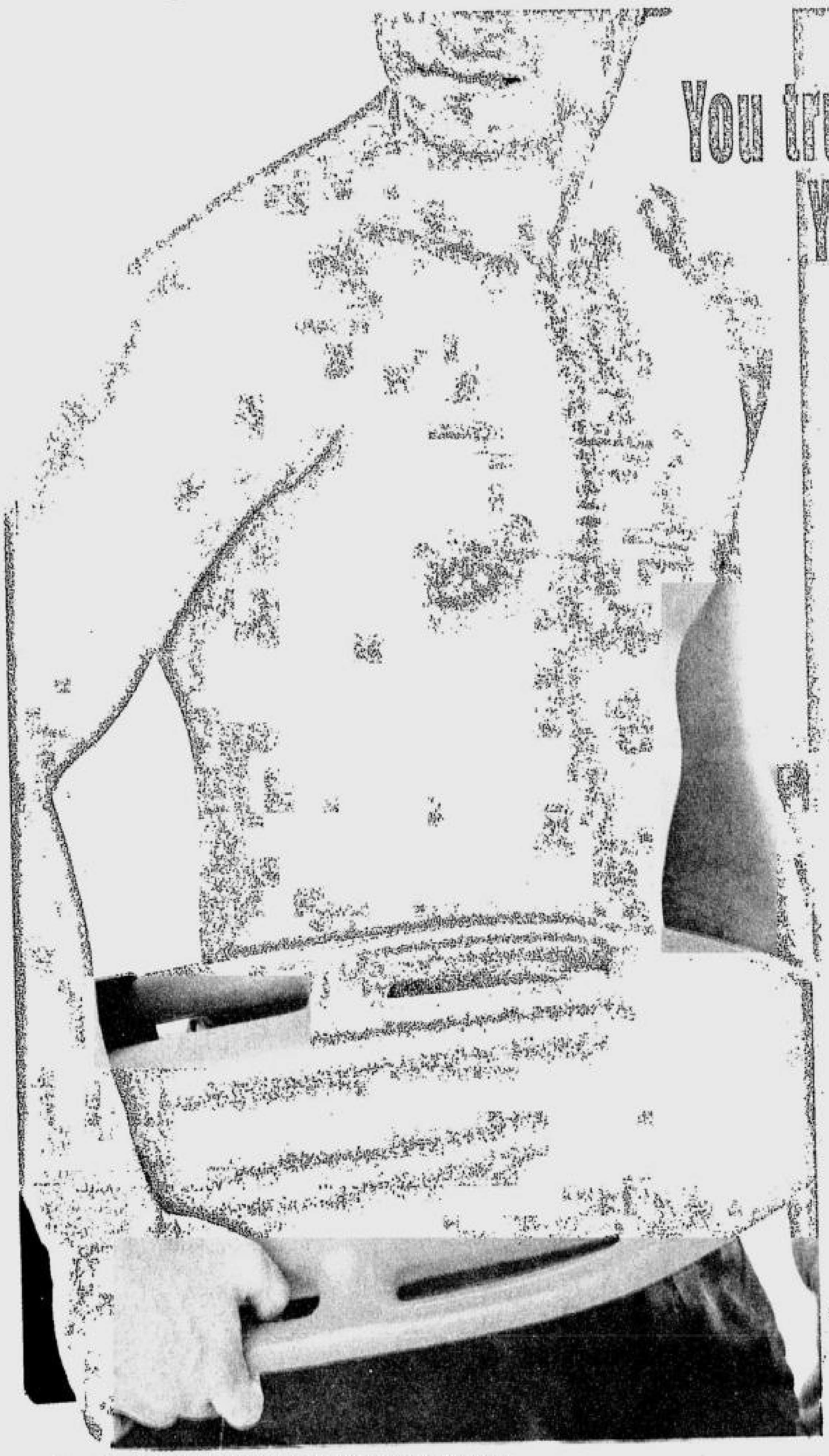
The 73-year-old lawmaker, who suffers from hypertension, also wants to be transferred to a hospital of his choice, according to Beltran's office, quoting his wife Rosario.

Beltran is confined at the PNP General Hospital in Camp Crame, after his blood pressure shot up following his Feb. 25 arrest.

Police spokesperson Sr. Supt. Samuel Pagdilao said these matters were up to the court to decide.

"His case is now with the court. All requests relative to his disposition, including transfer of hospital would have to be coursed [through the court]," he said, adding that the PNP would prefer that Beltran stayed in Camp Crame.

Luige A. del Puerto and Norman Bordadora



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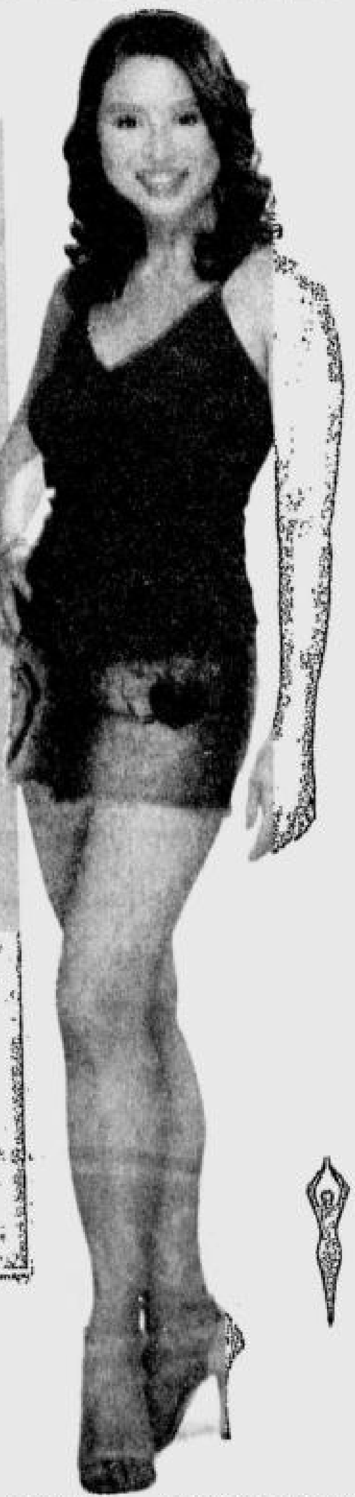

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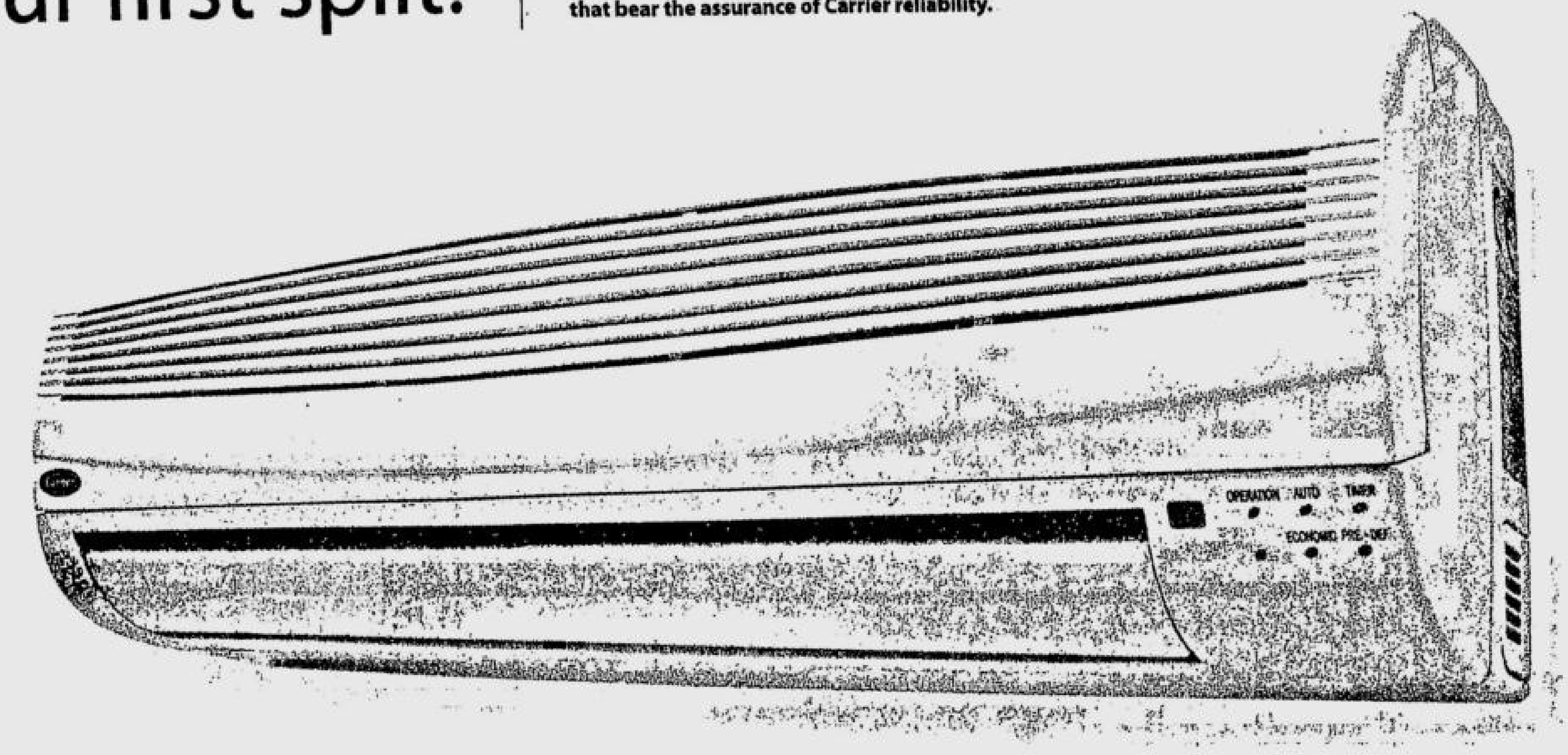

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₱116M allotted for Cebu roads ahead of summit

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND Highways is getting ready for the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit which the Philippines is hosting in Cebu in December. Top leaders from the association's member-countries are expected in the country for the event.

The DPWH has allocated P116 million for the expansion of the roads in Lapu-Lapu City in Cebu in preparation for the summit.

Director Robert Lala of DPWH Region VII said in a statement the amount would be used to fund road works from Barangay Basak up to the Marigondon Causeway in Lapu-Lapu City.

Of the amount, P13 million would be used to expand the roads from the Mactan Shrine to Barangay Punta Engaño. The remaining P103 million would be used to repair roads leading to Marigondon, especially to the hotels and resorts there where the Asean delegates are expected to stay.

Twelve of the 22 Asean dignitaries and their respective entourages will be staying at the Plantation Bay Resort and Spa in Barangay Marigondon and the Mactan Shangri-La Hotel and Resort and Hilton Cebu Resort and Spa in Barangay Punta Engaño, according to the DPWH statement.

Aside from the Philippines, the Asean member-countries are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

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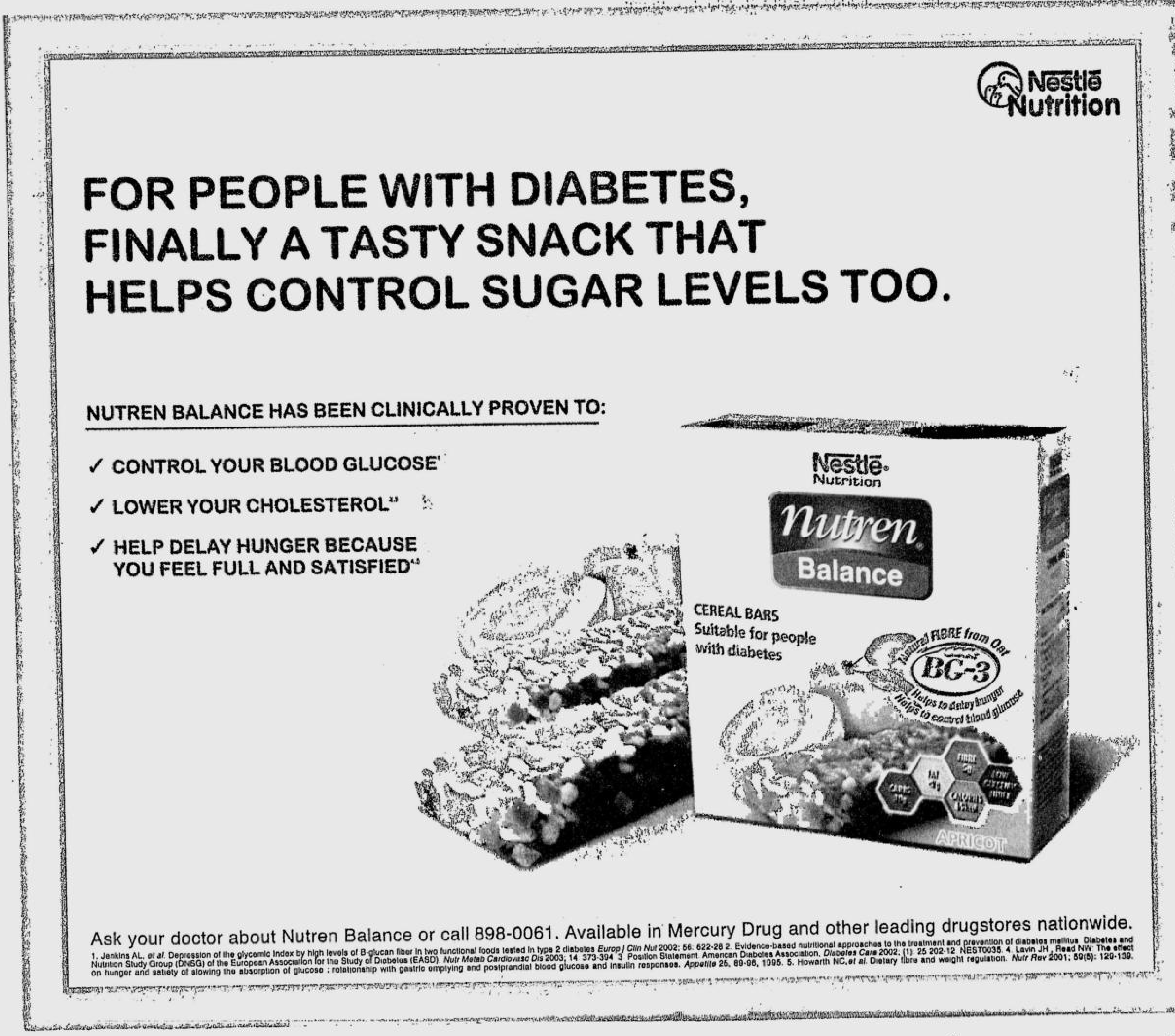
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Shock, dismay over death of 'Balkans butcher'

From page A1

Tomanovic, a legal adviser of Milosevic, said the former Yugoslav president claimed to have been the target of an attempted poisoning.

The death of Milosevic came just six days after the suicide in the same prison of his former ally, the 50-year-old former Croatian Serb leader Milan Babic, who pleaded guilty to crimes against humanity perpetrated during the 1991-95 war in Croatia.

Escaped justice

The death of Milosevic likewise caused widespread dismay that he had forever escaped justice. On the streets of Belgrade, Serbs reacted with shock, anger and relief.

"It is not fair that the bastard died in a dream while others died in pain," 43-year-old Belgrade resident Duska said.

"Now Sloba's supporters will make him a martyr, saying he would rather die than betray his country," 35-year-old Janko Petrovic said, referring to Milosevic by his nickname.

"Finally, we have some reason to smile. God is fair," said Hajra Catic, who heads an association of women who lost loved ones in the 1995 Serb massacre of 8,000 Muslims in the Bosnian enclave of Srebrenica.

"It is a pity he didn't live to the end of the trial to get the sentence he deserved," Croatian President Stipe Mesic said.

Milosevic had insisted on serving as his own lawyer while on trial since February 2002 on more than 60 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the Balkan wars in the 1990s. He had faced separate genocide charges related to the 1992-95 war in Bosnia, where Serb military strategies to depopulate non-Serb areas became known as "ethnic cleansing."

The trial of Milosevic and that of Saddam Hussein are widely considered as the most important legal tests the world has faced since the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals brought Axis leaders to justice after World War II.

Both trials, however, have come under criticism because of frequent interruptions and the ability of the defendants to use the courtroom as a stage to launch vitriolic anti-Western diatribes.

Hope for reconciliation

Even so, Europe reacted with hope that Milosevic's death might lead to reconciliation in the Balkans.

"I hope very much this event, the death of Milosevic will help Serbia to look definitely to the future," said European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana, who was in Salzburg for EU talks with policymakers from the Balkans.

But Richard Holbrooke, the former US negotiator for the former Yugoslavia, had few kind words for the man.

"I spent more time with Milosevic probably than any other westerner. I'm not going to shed any tears for him," Holbrooke told CNN.

"He was a communist opportunist and became an opportunistic nationalist. His actions led to the deaths of over 300,000 people, four wars, instability in Europe, creation of criminal gangs ... He was never going to see daylight again and that was appropriate and now he's gone."

Milosevic defied international sanctions and Nato bombs over nearly a decade of strife in the former Yugoslavia. The Serb nationalist stoked conflicts that left hundreds of thousands dead, up to three million homeless and the Serbian economy in ruins.

The burly firebrand made no apologies for his actions in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo, where his drive for a Greater Serbia "cleansed" of Croats and Muslims sparked a rash of massacres and finally a showdown with the West.

"I'm proud for everything I did in defending my country and my people," he told US television network Fox News in a telephone interview in 2001 from his jail outside The Hague.

Keen tactician

Milosevic—at turns charming and ruthlessly cunning—was a keen tactician who turned his country's defeats into personal victories and held onto power for 13 years despite losing four years that broke up the former Yugoslavia and left his people impoverished.

Milosevic always managed to emerge politically stronger from the wars he had lost. The secret of his survival was his uncanny ability to exploit what less adroit figures would consider a fatal blow.

He once described himself as the "Ayatollah Khomeini of Serbia," assuring his prime minister, Milan Panic, that "the Serbs will follow me no matter what."

In the end, however, his people abandoned him—first in October 2000 when he was unable to convince the majority of Yugoslavs that he had staved off electoral defeat by his successor, Vojislav Kostunica, and again on April 1, 2001 when he surrendered after a 26-hour standoff to face criminal charges.

Milosevic was born in Pozarevac, a factory town in central Serbia best known as the home of one of the country's most notorious prisons.

His father was a defrocked Orthodox priest and sometime teacher of Russian. His mother was also a teacher. Both parents committed suicide 10 years apart.

In high school, Milosevic met his future wife, the daughter of a wartime communist partisan hero. She also was the niece of Davorjanka Paunovic, private secretary and mistress of Josip Broz Tito, the communist guerrilla leader who seized power in Yugoslavia at the end of World War II.

Milosevic graduated from law school in 1964 and joined the Communist Party. The party put him in various business positions, and in 1983, he was appointed director of a major state-run bank. He became friends with several Western figures, including former US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and banker David Rockefeller.

He also befriended Ivan Stambolic, who became the leader of the Communist Party in Serbia in 1984. Stambolic picked Milosevic for the powerful post of party leader in the capital, Belgrade.

And when Stambolic was elevated to president of Serbia in 1986, Milosevic succeeded him as Serbian communist boss.

Kosovo

A year later, Stambolic sent Milosevic to Kosovo, where Serbs were demanding protection from the ethnic Albanian majority. During a meeting of local Serb leaders, hundreds of angry people gathered outside and demanded the leadership hear their grievances.

Milosevic faced the crowd and delivered a fiery speech, telling them: "Nobody has the right to beat you."

Those words shattered the myth of ethnic "brotherhood and unity," which had been the slogan of Tito's communist regime—and transformed Milosevic into a Serb hero.

Months later, in September 1987, Milosevic publicly accused his old friend Stambolic and others of anticommunist and anti-Serbian policies during a party meeting televised live nationwide. All were forced to resign in a de facto coup.

In 1989, Milosevic became president of Serbia in elections widely considered rigged. His rise alarmed the other peoples of former Yugoslavia—Slovenes, Croats, Macedonians, Albanians and others.

In 1991, Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence from Yugoslavia. Milosevic sent tanks to Slovenian borders, triggering a brief war that ended in Slovenia's secession.

Serbs in Croatia, encouraged by Milosevic, took up arms. Milosevic responded by sending the Serb-led Yugoslav Army to intervene, triggering a conflict that left at least 10,000 people dead.

Three months later, Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its independence. Milosevic bankrolled the Bosnian Serb rebellion, triggering an even bigger war that killed an estimated 200,000 people before a US-brokered peace agreement was reached at Dayton, Ohio, in 1995.

Reports from AP and AFP

'Kuya' Joe postpones eviction of 'Housemates'

From page A1

charges for their involvement in the alleged leftist-rightist conspiracy to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Borrowing a phrase from the reality TV show "Big Brother," De Venecia said he was postponing the "mass eviction" of the five militants from the House premises although this went against the wishes of Malacañang.

Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teddy Casiño and Joel Virador of Bayan Muna, Liza Maza of Gabriela and Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis have been under De Venecia's protective custody since Feb. 27, on the third day of Ms Arroyo's declaration of a state of national emergency.

A sixth lawmaker, Crispin Beltran of Anakpawis, was arrested earlier.

The President lifted the state of emergency on March 3, but police and security forces were continuing operations against the alleged plotters.

The five lawmakers have openly called on Ms Arroyo to quit and have been at the forefront of antigovernment street protests. If charged and convicted, they could be jailed for up to 20 years.

Ocampo said De Venecia relayed to him the Speaker's intention to have the preliminary investigation, set for 3 p.m. today, conducted at the Batasan complex in Quezon City instead of at the Department of Justice in Manila.

"JDV called me up (yesterday) morning to say that he would ask the DOJ to move the preliminary investigation to the House," Ocampo said.

Later in the day, House Majority Leader Prospero C. Nograles of Davao City confirmed De Venecia's request, saying the House leadership has granted the request for the transfer of the preliminary investigation's venue.

The investigation will determine whether the five lawmakers should be indicted on charges of coup d'etat and rebellion, Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco said yesterday.

Out of respect

Ocampo, Maza, Virador, Casiño and Mariano are among 16 opposition figures whom the police have recommended should be charged by the justice department.

"The holding of the PI (preliminary investigation) at Congress is out of respect for our lawmakers," said Emmanuel Velasco, who heads a special antirebellion task force at the justice department.

The decision was to "spare the congressmen the trouble of travelling" to the justice department. Police earlier said they would immediately arrest the legislators if they left the House premises.

Star witness

Prosecutors will also present today a "star witness" who has knowledge of the five's alleged involvement, Velasco said without elaborating.

"There is obviously an alliance (between communist rebels and military men)," said Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, adding that documents seized from the rebels would prove this.

Apart from the leftists, the military has detained 25 soldiers including eight officers mostly from the elite Army Scout Ranger unit.

In a bind

The group is being investigated for alleged links to the plot, while their commander, Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, was removed on the day Ms Arroyo assumed emergency powers. Two Marine officials and the head of a police commando unit were also sacked.

Last week, De Venecia complained that he was getting "tired" of playing "Big Brother," citing the expenses incurred in providing for the food, water, electricity, security and other needs of the party-list representatives.

"They even turned my room (Speaker's conference room) into a dormitory," said De Venecia, who found himself in a bind because some administration allies now view the chamber as a safe haven for "wanted" lawmakers.

The five spend the night together in the room but go back to their respective offices in the adjacent Mitra building during the day.

Buoyed by the outpouring of support for his "Housemates," De Venecia apparently turned his lamentations into jokes.

Told that the five lawmakers had been "under his wings" for two weeks now, the Speaker said: "Well, don't they (producers of the reality show) usually evict one housemate every week?"

He was referring to the eviction of a housemate from the "Big Brother" show every week.

Violent scenario

De Venecia has maintained that his decision to keep the five lawmakers on the House premises was aimed at preventing a violent scenario in which the five would be "hunted down in the mountains" without dignity.

"The arrangement of protective custody was intended to provide them their full constitutional rights while maintaining that they should submit themselves to the processes under the law and the Constitution," he said.

Nograles, who also heads the House committee on rules, cited security reasons for the decision to change the venue of the preliminary investigation.

"The House leadership has granted the request for change of venue so as to avoid a security problem," he said without elaborating.

Nograles said the House leadership remained committed to providing protective custody to the five lawmakers. "Until warrants of arrest are issued against them, there will be no transfer of custody to the proper authorities," he said.

"That was why House Resolution No. 1169 was passed (so that) the five congressmen would be able to realize that the Lower Chamber is upholding the rights of its members against warrantless arrest and similar incidents that (may be faced) by other members in trouble," Nograles said.

Breach of courtesy

The Philippine National Police complained of a "breach of courtesy" when Maza went to the Senate on March 6 to attend the bicameral conference committee meeting on the juvenile justice system bill.

Although facing arrest, Maza said the police could not bar her from "fulfilling a constitutional function" because she was sent by the House minority to the Senate as one of the principal authors of the bill.

She went back to the House hours later but the PNP felt slighted.

With a report from AFP

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ARMM gets ₱8.3-B budget

By Charlie C. Señase
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—THE SENATE HAS APproved an P8.3-billion budget for the strife-torn Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which is 20 percent lower than its original proposed budget of P9.9 billion.

The Senate concurred with the House approval of the 2006 ARMM budget.which would be apportioned according to the socioeconomic and infrastructural needs of the five ARMM provinces wracked by decades of armed conflict and vendetta killings.

The region is composed of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Marawi City.

Local leaders welcomed the new budget for ARMM which is 15 percent higher than last year's P7.2 billion.

ARMM Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan said the bulk of the budget would go to salaries and other benefits for the region's employees and only a tiny part would be used for development.

Considered one of the most depressed regions in the country, ARMM needs funding support to build schools, hospitals, roads, bridges and other basic community needs like light and water, the governor said.

"About 60 percent of the entire budget goes to personnel services, 22 percent to maintenance and operating expenses, and 18 percent for capital outlay," Ampatuan said.

Of the total P8.3-billion budget, about P5 billion will be allotted for personnel services, P1.8 billion for miscellaneous and other operating expenses, and P1.4 billion for capital outlay.

Ampatuan would ask this month for a "supplemental budget" of P1.03 billion from President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Regional Legislative Assembly Speaker Hatimil Hassan said the original budget proposal of P9.9 billion for ARMM failed to get the nod of the Department of Budget and Management which has set a "standard ceiling" on budget increases.

Ampatuan is demanding an "equal and just sharing" of government allocations based on the local government unit's socioeconomic status and pending security and investment problems.

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Canadian landslide expert here to study Leyte tragedy

By Nikko Dizon

AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED Canadian landslide expert is here to help the government analyze why landslides occur. It will focus on last month's killer mudslide that wiped out an entire village in Southern Leyte.

The visit of Dr. Stephen George Evans, an expert from the University of Waterloo, Ontario, is part of the Canadian government's assistance to the Philippines following the landslide, Philippine Ambassador to Canada Jose Brillantes said in a report to Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo.

Evans has volunteered his services and his trip was supported by the Research and Conference Fund of Foreign Affairs Canada.

Evans and his research assistant, Rick Guthrie, arrived in Manila on March 9 for a seven-day visit.

They will join experts from the Bureau of Mines and Geosciences at the landslide site that used to be Barangay Guinsaugon in the town of St. Bernard on Feb. 17.

More than a hundred were injured and nearly a thousand residents were believed buried alive. The search for survivors in Guinsaugon officially ended a week after the killer mudslide struck the area.

The INQUIRER reported that the landslide was a tragedy waiting to happen, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The region of St. Bernard has been the scene of natural disasters since 1749, when a volcano in the area erupted through its six vents. Four deadly landslides and floods have struck the region, claiming thousands of lives since 1991, according to historical records.

Also, the site of the Feb. 17 mudslide lies near the so-called Philippine fault which refers to a crack along the earth's crust that could generate earthquakes.

"Geologically, it (the area) is underlain by volcanic rocks characterized by intense fracturing and weathering," the DENR said in a statement. "This makes it unstable and susceptible to mass movement."

In a press statement, the DFA said: "Dr. Evans will prepare an analytical report of the landslide causes for Philippine authorities and provide them with a workshop on risk mitigation strategies against further landslides."

Evans has investigated landslides and other geological hazards in Canada and other countries since 1982.

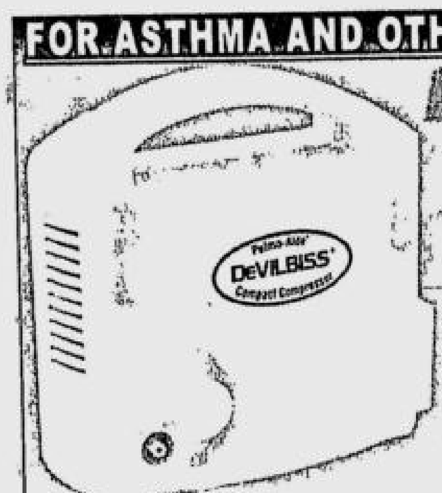
These included landslide-related train derailments in Canada, urban landslides in Algeria, earthquake-triggered landslides in Japan and El Salvador, and the avalanche in North Ossetia in Russia that buried the village of Karmadon and adjacent areas in 2002.

Jazz for PALS concert set

"JAZZ FOR PALS (PEOPLE WITH Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis)," a benefit concert, will feature top jazz artists to promote awareness of ALS.

The concert to be held on March 18 will feature Albert de Pano and the HQ Band, Susan Fernandez and Egay Avenir, Lester Demetillo, John Lesaca, Noel Cabangon, Mon Espia, Jun Latonio, Jay Cayuca, Glen Javelosa and other guest artists.

San Beda College alumni, UERM College of Medicine '84, UPSCA alumni and My Brother's Mustache are sponsoring the concert to be held at My Brother's Mustache, Scout Tuazon corner Scout Madriñan in Quezon City.



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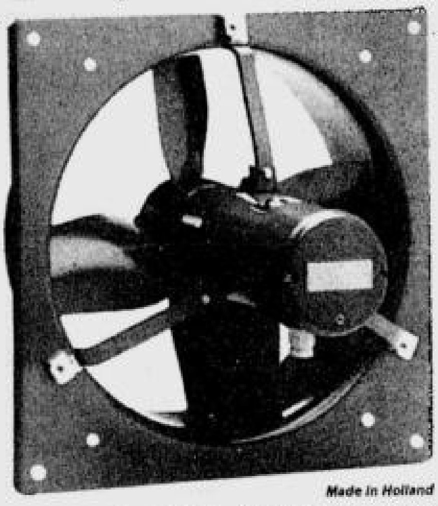

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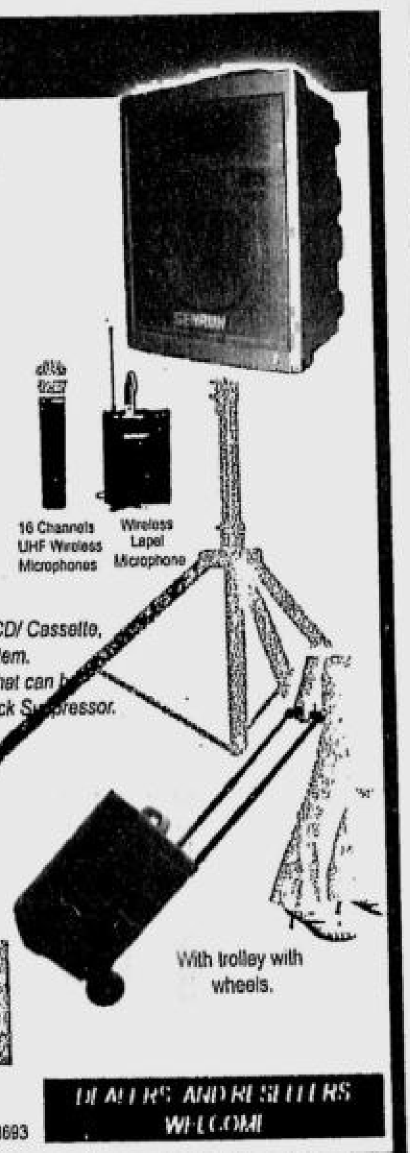

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March 16-17	11:00am - 6:00pm
March 18	11:00am - 4:00pm

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SCHEDULE OF PRODUCT PRESENTATIONS

SEMINAR ROOM 1

Code		March 16, 2006 (Thursday)	Company Name
A1	12:00nn - 12:45pm	Basic Hydraulic System & Seal Materials	Economos Phils. Inc.
A2	2:00pm - 2:45pm	Lower Your Operating Cost Thru Good Filtration Maintenance	Donaldson Filtration
A3	4:00pm - 4:45pm	Understanding Close- Loop Hydraulic System	Morse Hydraulic
		March 17, 2006 (Friday)	
B1	12:00nn - 1:45pm	ADDMIX- Ang Sekreto ng Mahusay na Kongkreto	ADDMIX-Bostix
B2	2:00pm - 2:45pm	An Exciting Journey Thru Total Solutions (Construction and Mining)	Atlas Copco
B3	3:00pm - 3:45pm	Custom Design Products for Oil & Gas Application	Atlas Copco
B4	4:00pm - 4:45pm	Safety in the Mining Industry	CIGI
		March 18, 2006 (Saturday)	
C1	12:00nn - 12:45pm	Geotechnical Solutions for the Mining Industry	Phil. Gabions Inc.
C2	2:00pm - 2:45pm	Wire Rope Basic	Wire Rope

SEMINAR ROOM 2

Code		March 16, 2006 (Thursday)	Company Name
D1	1:00pm - 1:45pm	The Name for Material Handling	Mhe- Demag (P) Inc.
D2	2:00pm - 2:45pm	Sizing: Its Role in Mineral Production	MMD Mineral Sizing (Europe) Limited
D3	3:00pm - 3:45pm	Shotcrete Technology	Elasto Plastics
D4	5:00pm - 5:45pm	Business Risks	Business Profiles
		March 17, 2006 (Friday)	
E1	1:00pm - 1:45pm	Introduction to Volvo EC700B Hydraulic Excavation	Civic Merchandising Inc.
E2	2:00pm - 2:45pm	New Product Presentation for Heavy Lift	Crosby Group Inc. with Benedicto Steel
E3	3:00pm - 3:45pm	INGAL Company & Product Presentation	Industrial Galvanizers Corp. of the Phils.
E4	4:00pm - 4:45pm	Introduction to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's)	Top Rigid Safety Supply Inc.
E5	5:00pm - 5:45pm	Using Belt Cleaning System in Belt Conveyors	Beta Equipment
		March 18, 2006 (Saturday)	
F1	1:00pm - 1:45pm	Varian Atomic Spectroscopy	Molave Trading
F2	3:00pm - 3:45pm	Bisazza: Endless Possibilities	Bisazza Phils.

ASIA MINING CONFERENCE

SEMINAR ROOM 3 March 18, 2006 (Saturday)
12:00nn - 4:00pm

TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED AND PRESENTED
- Update on SNAP and other activities PMSEA to help in mining and nation building
- Update and status of 24 mining projects
- The state of Philippine Mining
- Role of Mining in Local Communities
- Nonmetals: Cement companies and ISO14001
- Grassroots acceptance of mining in host communities
- Mining as a profession and calling
- Opportunities in mining for Local & International contractors
- New Filtration Technology for the Mining Industry
- Opportunities for Contractors in Mining: The Philex Experience

CONSTRUCTION TECHNICAL SEMINARS

SEMINAR ROOM 3 March 16, 2006 (Thursday)

TOPIC A:	2:00pm - 4:00pm	Impact of R-VAT on the Construction Industry *by Atty. Vic Mamalateo (PCA Tax Consultant)*
		March 17, 2006 (Friday)
TOPIC B:	1:30pm - 3.30pm	National Building Code & its Impact on the Construction Industry *(by Arch. Manuel Cantupay)*
TOPIC C:	4:00pm - 6:00pm	A Symposium in PCA Rules and Regulation *by Ramon Allado (PCA Board Member)*

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CD shows House break-in, 'theft' of election returns

From page A1

members of an elite police group, are to be believed, six House civilian employees stole election returns from 38 provinces and replaced them with fake and tampered ones.

The break-in took place during the ungodly hours between late January 2005 and early February 2005 inside the room at the South Wing of the Batasan complex where the ballot boxes were once kept.

They barged into the room at around 2 a.m., opened the ballot boxes, and took the election returns while a group of heavily armed policemen stood guard outside the complex in Quezon City on orders, the officers said, of a retired police general.

The employees did the same thing five more times during the period before the ballot boxes were turned over by the House of Representatives to the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET) early last year.

Digital video cam

All this was recorded by one of the security officers using a small digital video camera. The video is now stored in a compact disc.

Noel Albano, deputy secretary general of the House, denied reports of a break-in, saying all security officers were accounted for. "But if they could show the video, that would prompt an investigation," he said.

The group of House police officers played the CD before the INQUIRER last week. The CD lasted for a few minutes, but it showed several scenes all involving people holding what seemed to be ballot boxes. They were going in and out of a room.

To reinforce the point that there was switching of election returns, the officers showed six envelopes containing what looked like six original copies of election returns from Lanao del Sur, Southern Leyte, Negros Occidental, Benguet, among other places—or what remained, they said, of the original election returns from 38 different provinces stolen during the break-in.

The rest of the election returns, they said, were either burned or brought to a printing press owned by a lawyer in Cainta, Rizal, where some election returns had been fabricated.

Interestingly, another CD shown to the INQUIRER, also last week, by another set of policemen detailed how election returns were allegedly fabricated in the printing press in Cainta. The CD identified the owner of the printing machine, his address, and the plate number of the cars used in the delivery of the returns.

The two CDs were the latest in a series of what seemed like proofs of irregularities and cover-ups in the last elections. The others were the "Hello Garci" tape, tampered election returns presented by former Sen. Loren Legarda (running mate of the late presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.) and her primary witness before the PET, Segundo Tabayoyong, a former top document analyst of the National Bureau of Investigation.

Poe and Legarda ahead

In many, if not all of the stolen returns from the 38 provinces, the officers said, Poe and Legarda won over President Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro.

Most of the six elections returns shown to the INQUIRER were still sealed. Because these were sealed, it could not really be ascertained who really won in these provinces, but if these were real, the officers said, they were not supposed to be out of the PET.

Ms Arroyo was declared the winner of the 2004 presidential election, leading Poe by 1.12 million votes. De Castro led Legarda by more than 800,000 votes. Like Ms Arroyo's, the bulk of De Castro's lead was from Cebu, the subject of Legarda's electoral protest.

The video has never been publicized. Neither has it reached the PET, which is hearing the electoral protest filed by Legarda against De Castro.

But it has been a hot topic of secret meetings among some opposition leaders. Where and how to get a copy is a big problem.

The INQUIRER first learned of the video from a retired colonel last year. His information, it turned out, was a faithful account of the contents of the video.

Opposition leaders, he said, thought the CD might now be their "last card" in their efforts to get some answers to questions on the alleged cheating and cover-up in the 2004 elections.

CDs for sale

Some of the policemen have allegedly asked Legarda to buy the CD, but she reportedly turned it down because the price was too high. It was also offered to the group of Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a defeated presidential candidate, through Rep. Ronaldo Zamora of San Juan, Metro Manila.

Contacted for comment, Legarda said she had received reports about the video, but she refused to confirm or deny that it had been offered to her.

The video has been in the custody of 20 or so soldiers, policemen and civilians, all once detailed at the Batasan. Some of them are in hiding, the officers said, because they fear the retired police general.

But the footage and the copies of the election returns tend to give credence to Legarda's allegations made before the PET last Dec. 14 that the tribunal was looking at spurious election returns.

Alterations

Suggesting that the alterations could have been done right inside the House of Representatives, Legarda's lawyer, Sixto Brillantes, cited the election returns from Balindong and Taraca towns in Lanao del Sur.

Brillantes said these were different from the certified true copies of the Commission on Elections, of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel), and of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, an opposition party.

An election return is the official document of the record and results of an election in a certain precinct. It shows the date of the election, the polling place, the barangay, the municipality and the city where it was held, and the total number of votes obtained by each candidate in words and in figures, among others.

In the last elections, the precinct board of elections prepared seven copies of the election returns and these were distributed to the Comelec, the Board of Canvassers, the Senate, the dominant majority party, the dominant minority party, Namfrel and the provincial election supervisor. One copy was placed inside the ballot box.

Too symmetrical

Legarda said her theory about the rigging having been done in the House of Representatives was being borne out by the allegedly dubious returns examined from Balindong town, particularly when these were compared with the copies of the returns held by the Comelec.

Legarda has her party's official copies and certified true copies from the poll body.

Tabayoyong said a fake election return lacked the proper signatures or thumb marks of election officers or both, and the ink used was not that issued by the Comelec.

The most glaring irregularity in the 2004 elections, he said, was that hundreds of the election returns bore tally bars (or "taras") that were too proportional or symmetrical to have been made under pressure—a condition typical in a precinct during tallying.

Legarda said she was accusing neither Speaker Jose de Venecia nor other House members but De Castro's "administrative operatives" in Congress, or whoever had access to the ballot boxes while they were in the custody of Congress.

"Lest we forget, there had been persistent reports that last January and February (2005), operatives of the administration had sneaked inside Congress reportedly to tamper with the contents of the ballot boxes being kept there," she said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, March 13, 2006
2nd Week of Lent

1st Reading: Dn 9:4-10
Gospel: Luke 6:36-38

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

"Don't be a judge of others and you will not be judged; do not condemn and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven; give and it will be given to you, and you will receive in your sack good measure, pressed down, full and running over. For the measure you give will be the measure you receive back."

Commentary

It is early in Lent, and like our ancestors we are in dire need of God's merciful forgiveness because we are not faithful or forgiving or obedient. We are in rebellion against our God and we ignore the commandments. All of us are in need of God's covenant. And Jesus tells us how to turn: to be compassionate and seek to understand and treat others as God has treated us. We must learn to be generous in thought and intention towards others as well as in practice and not judge harshly. What measure are we using on others these days? Careful! That is the measure God uses on us!

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Cop killed in clash with NPA

DAVAO—ABOUT 60 COMMUNIST guerrillas opened fire on a police station in a remote town in Davao Oriental province on Sunday, sparking a brief gunbattle that killed one policeman and wounded two others, police said.

Villagers saw suspected New People's Army guerrillas carrying at least two of their own wounded comrades from the scene of the fighting in Baganga town, according to provincial police chief Senior Supt. Candido Casimiro.

Although outnumbered, the few policemen put up fierce resistance to prevent the guerrillas from entering the small station and seizing weapons, Casimiro said.

He said the guerrillas continued to fire on the police officers even as they transported their wounded to a hospital, adding that the rebels then retreated probably fearing the arrival of government reinforcement troops.

Communist guerrillas are active in the impoverished region of Davao Oriental.

The guerrillas are on US and European lists of terrorist organizations. They suspended Norwegian-brokered talks with the government in 2004, saying Manila had refused to take steps to remove them from the terror blacklists.

The rebels, who have been waging a rural-based Marxist rebellion since the late 1960s, number about 7,500, according to the military. *AP*

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NBI turns up heat on Time reporter

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE TIME MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT in Manila, who wrote about a supposed coup plot against President Macapagal-Arroyo, is under increasing pressure from the National Bureau of Investigation to appear at its offices.

The NBI again invited Nelly Sindayen to shed light on her article implicating Philippine Olympic Committee chief Jose "Peping" Cojuangco and Council on Philippine Affairs (Copa) secretary general Pastor "Boy" Saycon in the alleged coup attempt.

"Ms Sindayen has been ignoring our previous invitations," NBI Special Task Force (STF) executive officer Arnel Dalumpines said.

Dalumpines said the invitation letters were sent to Sindayen's house in Magallanes Village, Makati City.

"We will again invite her to appear at the NBI because her statement is very vital in our investigation of the alleged coup attempt," Dalumpines said.

Subpoena

NBI STF chief Reynaldo Esmeralda had earlier warned that they would subpoena Sindayen if she failed to show up at the bureau.

"We are giving her another chance to clarify her article," Dalumpines said.

NBI officer in charge Nestor Mantaring said they had written to Time editor Michael Elliot regarding Sindayen's piece.

Elliot told the NBI that they would look into the matter and get in touch with the bureau "in due course."

Plan discussed

In her article, Sindayen said she was invited to a meeting held at the home of Cojuangco "where a possible plan for a withdrawal of support from President Arroyo was being discussed."

Sindayen said the Feb. 23 meeting was attended by more than a dozen middle-level politicians and businessmen, including Pasig Rep. Robert Jaworski Jr. and former Rep. Ding Tanjuatco.

Sindayen also reported that Saycon spoke over the phone to a person he identified as an American official in Washington who assured them of US support, and a man whom he addressed as "Delta"—later identified as Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim.

In the Time article, Saycon reportedly said that a military contingent was to join the protesters in their march to the Edsa Shrine on Feb. 24, where they would be met by a group of Catholic bishops and a Marine general who would then read a statement withdrawing support from the President.

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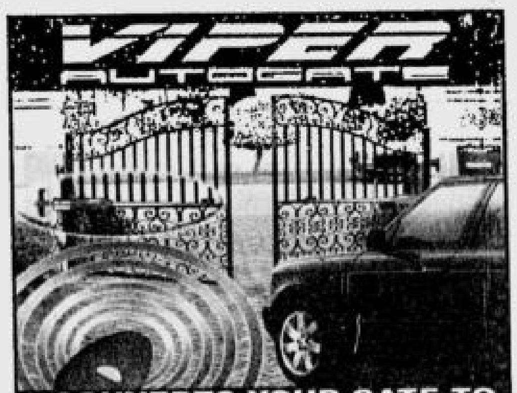

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‘Poor governance discouraging Pinoy investors’

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE GOVERNMENT HAS FOREgone some $10.4 billion in potential investments from Filipinos abroad, which could have generated nearly 1.6 million jobs, due to the dismal handling of the country’s affairs, according to labor leader Ernesto Herrera, a former senator.

“Poor governance is the single biggest disincentive for wealthy Filipinos to invest their money in their own country,” Herrera said in a statement.

The amount has instead been put into foreign equities, money market and multi-currency accounts, bonds, deposit certificates and even precious metals in other countries.

Herrera, who heads the moderate labor group Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, said one of the factors keeping Filipinos from investing in their own country was deficient law enforcement, as manifested by corruption, smuggling and other crimes.

Another is the high lending rates, which he said could be attributed to excessive government borrowing and wasteful spending.

The TUCP leader also said the country needed to be more stable politically and to institute reforms to make it run efficiently if it wanted to benefit from the $10.4 billion or P534 billion in “passive investments” overseas by Filipinos as reported by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Herrera said the $10.4 billion could generate 1.56 million jobs in the Philippines under the “rule of thumb” that $100,000 in investments could produce 15 good-paying jobs, using the country’s information technology-enabled services industry as a model.

“These passive investments abroad by Filipinos will come back once the country succeeds in carrying out meaningful governance reforms, and once we achieve political stability and sustained economic growth,” he said.

Recently, the country was placed under a state of national emergency following an alleged plot to unseat President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The issuance of the declaration, followed by the arrest of several people, the raid on a newspaper office and a warning from the police to the media to follow government guidelines in reporting, sent the foreign exchange rate plummeting.

OFWs warned on scams via text messages, e-mail

By Nikko Dizon

PHILIPPINE DIPLOmatic posts in The Hague and Hong Kong are warning overseas Filipino workers against lottery scams going around via text messages and e-mails, the Department of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

The DFA said the lottery scams “specifically target OFWs, wherein the victim receives either a text message or an e-mail informing him that he has won a large sum of money and instructs him to deposit or remit money to certain individuals to ensure that he can claim his ‘prize.’”

Philippine Ambassador to The Hague Romeo Arguelles reported to the home office that the embassy had recently issued an advisory to Filipino workers in the Netherlands about an e-mailed lottery scam that dupes OFWs into believing that they had won thousands of euros in an online lottery.

The supposed winners were requested to remit a hefty amount to a certain address indicated in the e-mail.

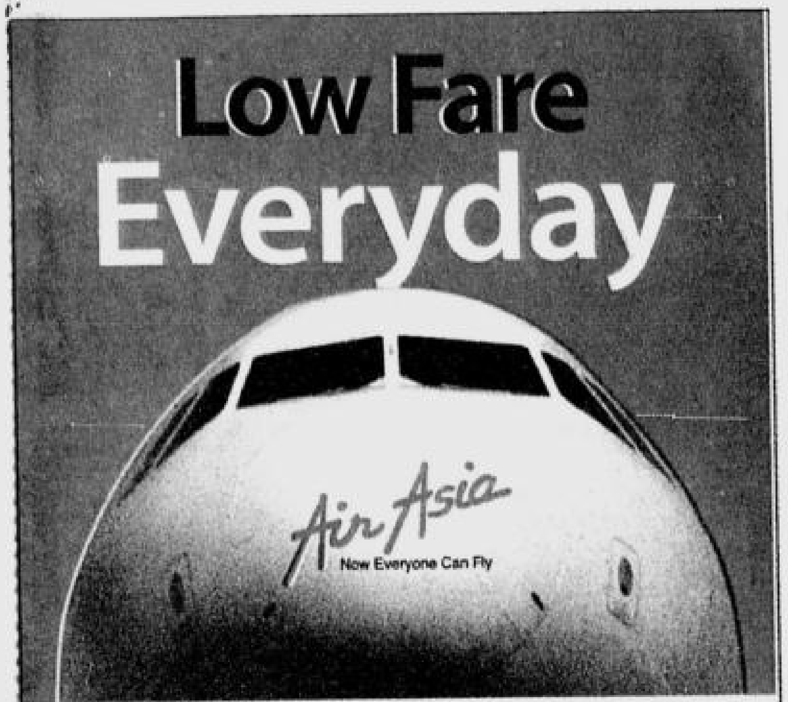
The advisory urged the Filipino community in the Netherlands to ignore these e-mails and not to remit any amount to any bank.

Arguelles said the embassy had identified two fictitious accounts—Saxo Financial Online Bank and Globalum Lottery Promotions.

In Hong Kong, Consul General Alejandrino Vicente reported that a woman OFW had complained to the consulate that she had been victimized by swindlers posing as officers of a certain “GMA Charity Foundation.”

The OFW said she received a text message on Feb. 14 informing her that she had won P3 million in an electronic raffle during the first anniversary of the supposed foundation.

Instead, she lost P55,000 to the swindlers who instructed her to deposit the amount in the Manila branch of an international bank. The amount would supposedly cover taxes and other fees as a pre-condition to claiming her “prize,” the DFA said.



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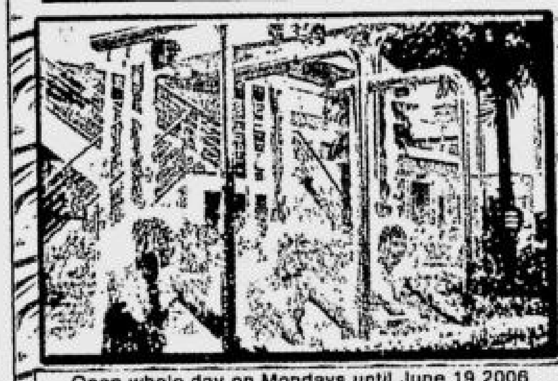

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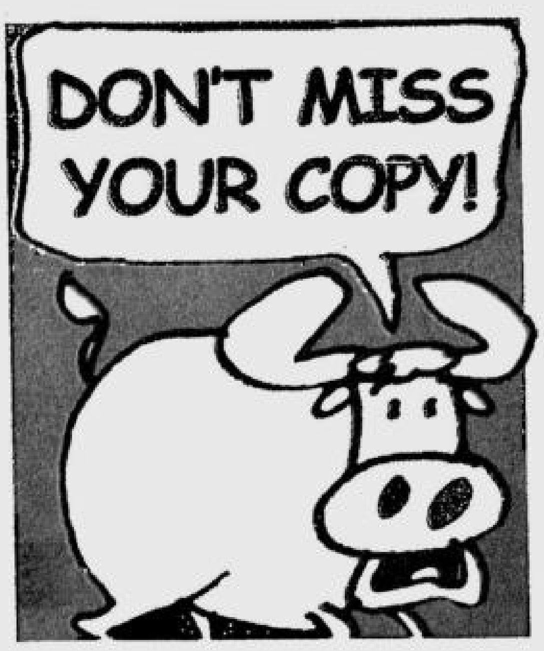
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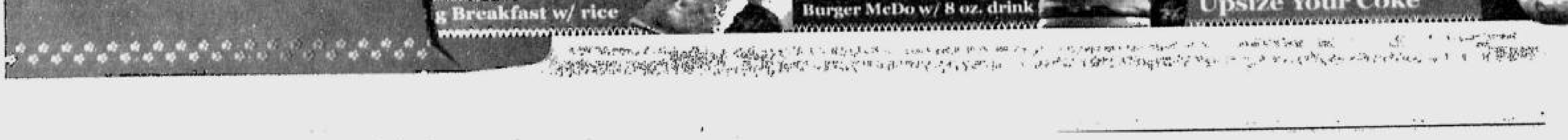


₱2,000 hike not enough, say workers

By Alcuin Papa

THE PROPOSED P2,000 INCREASE IN THE allowances of government workers will not be enough to offset higher prices and inflation, the employees union of the Department of Education (DepEd) said the other day.

Domingo Alidon, president of the Department of Education National Employees Union (DepEd-NEU) said the increase in the allowance granted by the Senate was a "welcome development."

But he said that this would not solve their financial problems in the long term.

He explained that the additional allowance would not even offset the rising cost of goods, oil, electricity and water, among other basic necessities. Instead, Alidon said, government workers would need a salary increase of P3,000.

"We appreciate such move of the Senate increasing our allowance by P2,000. But we shall be completely happy if Congress will enact a law increasing our salary by P3,000 across the board," he said.

The Manila Public School Teachers Association said the P2,000 allowance increase was not a cause for celebration.

Benjie Valbuena, president of the MPSTA, said their original demand was for a P3,000 across-the-board salary hike.

"This is just a partial victory. They should allocate more funds from the supplementary budget to grant our request. That will be the only time we can be happy," Valbuena said.

Alidon added that a P3,000 pay hike would be ideal since this would be included in the computation of their retirement benefits.

"Allowances are not included in the retirement computation and it's just a short-term solution. Hence, we prefer a long-term effect of a P3,000 salary increase," he said.

Both Valbuena and Alidon said a raise in their salaries was long overdue because they had not been given any wage increase in the last four years.

Government workers are also pressing the government to pay their cost of living allowance (Cola) after the Supreme Court recently granted Cola payments to employees of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA).

Strong peso good for RP, says Teves

DAVAO CITY—FINANCE SECRETARY MARgarito Teves said yesterday the strengthening of the peso was doing the country good.

But Teves became evasive when asked if he was batting for a stronger currency.

Earlier, National Economic and Development Authority Director General Romulo Neri asked the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to intervene as the peso was gaining strength.

Neri said the BSP should ensure that the peso would not appreciate further.

He said 51 or 52 pesos to the dollar was a comfortable rate and anything below that would make exporters complain more.

Teves acknowledged that a stronger peso had its upside and downside.

He said a stronger peso would attract more foreign investment and lower the budget deficit.

"Other positive developments, which in turn will come out well for the country's economy, would also happen," he said.

The downside, he said, was that exporters would have less profit.

Teves said it would also mean a slight reduction in the value of the remittances of overseas Filipino workers.

But having a stronger peso would also mean a good credit standing for the country, he said.

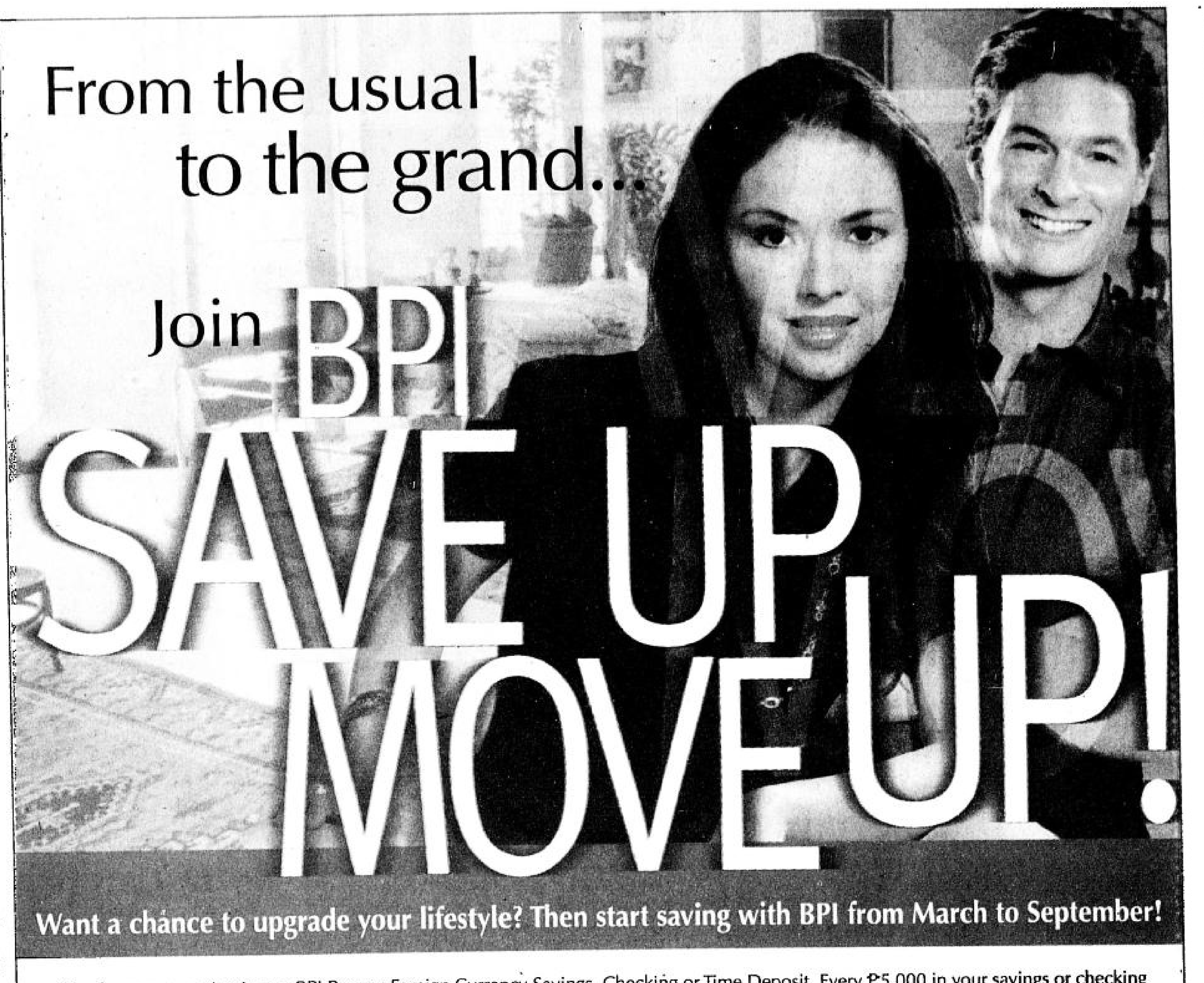
Teves, an economist, said many factors influenced the peso's growth, making it one of the "most difficult to predict" currencies in Asia.

"The peso should remain competitive," he said.

He said the BSP should intervene "only in exceptional circumstances, when the situation is extreme."

If the momentum continues, Teves said the deficit in the gross domestic product (GDP), which is currently at 2.7 percent, will go down.

"We will try to bring this down to P125 billion this year," he said. *Dennis Jay C. Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



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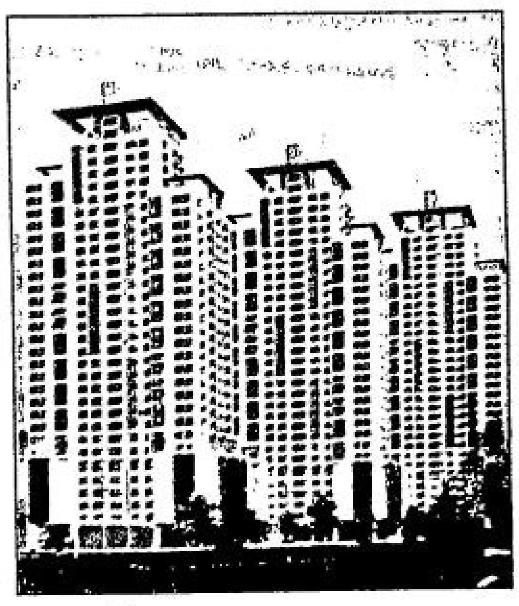

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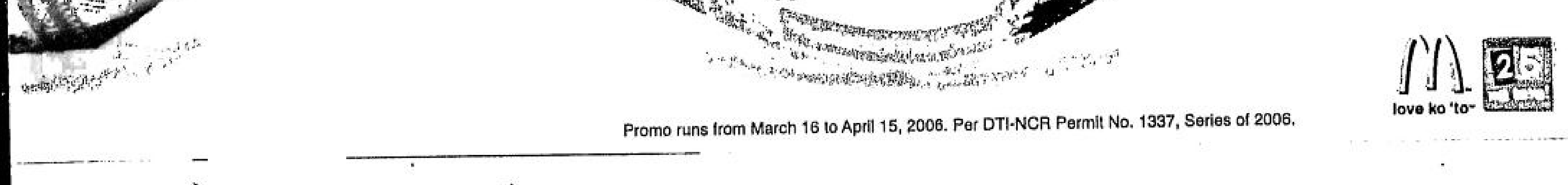

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Double-bladed

EDITORIAL

RODOLFO BIAZON BECAME FAMOUS WHEN HE shed tears on national television in December 1989, after defending Camp Aguinaldo during the bloodiest coup ever attempted. He became more famous, and an endearing national character even, 11 years later, when, as a senator on his second term, he famously attacked "legal gobbledygook" and pleaded for common-sense clarity during the Estrada impeachment trial.

Sadly, he now seems to be guilty of political gobbledygook himself, in a manner that threatens to bring tears to many eyes.

Since the President's crisis of legitimacy erupted last June, Biazon has warned about restiveness in the military. This is only to be expected, because the former Marine naturally sees soldiers and their dependents as his constituency. Perhaps unconsciously using the category of military rebel that became famous after the Magdalo mutiny in 2003, he has taken to referring to his sources as "junior officers." (He has since admitted that one of those who talked to him last year about the military's concerns regarding alleged fraud in the 2004 elections was Brig. Gen. Danny Lim of the Scout Rangers—surely the most senior "junior officer" in the country's history.) In all his statements, however, the man who was one of those largely responsible for quelling the 1989 coup has repeatedly failed to say, or emphasize, the essential truth: military intervention is anti-democratic.

In the last few days, he has been at it again. On Friday, he warned that the widened scope of the Armed Forces' crackdown on alleged coup plotters could backfire on the Arroyo administration. "In implementing this expanded coverage, the military should be very careful. This can be two-bladed," Biazon said.

"It may be true that it can suppress actions by these disgruntled elements, but it can build up restiveness to a point that it will take a small trigger to translate this restiveness into action. No one can predict what the consequences may be," he added.

He is of course speaking the truth, but—and here is the point—it is only a partial truth. And he knows it.

Gobbledygook is deliberate obfuscation; one strategy is to hide the truth behind a linguistic veil, another is to tell only part of the truth.

This is where Biazon fails us. He fails to condemn any attempt by **military** factions to resolve what is eminently a **political** crisis. His studied silence is ear-splitting. It gives rise to the not-unreasonable supposition that, because he is now on the side of the political fence opposite to Malacañang, he favors a military resolution.

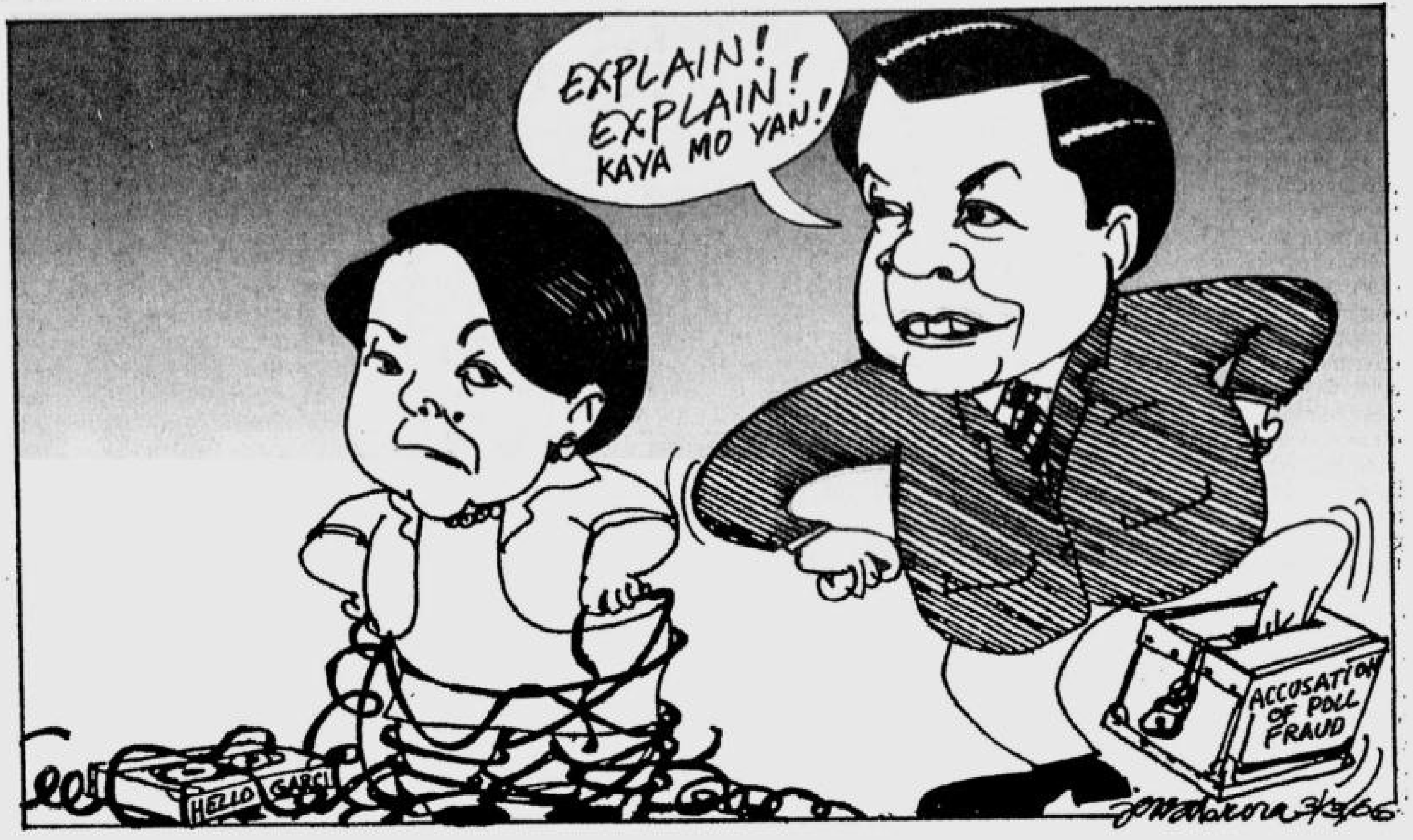
That cannot be quite right; his own democratic credentials are unimpeachable. In fact, when he was military commander for the National Capital Region and then AFP chief of staff, he was unequivocal about which side of the barracks door a soldier should place himself. Today, however, he gives the impression that he wouldn't mind it the least bit if the barracks door were thrown wide open.

Why is that? What explains the difference between his stand as a general defending the democratic restoration then and his selective silence now on the very morality of a coup? If he thinks Edsa II is the answer, he is grievously mistaken. The fundamental difference is that before it was the people who led the way.

Why should Biazon, and indeed every ex-professional soldier, decline to support the AFP's tougher, no-amnesty policy against those who seek to break the chain of command? The plea from both top brass and many in the rank-and-file is almost plaintive: Leave us alone.

Does Biazon think we can inoculate the armed services from politics simply by ordering coup plotters and misguided soldiers to do 20 push-ups? Of course, the crackdown must be handled carefully; that goes without saying. But officers and soldiers must be reminded, in these trying times, to leave politics to the people and the politicians. The situation is already explosive enough, without bringing in the men and women with guns. **That** requires saying, over and over again.

None of this excuses the Arroyo administration's apparent mishandling of the military, or puts paid to lingering questions about the role of certain officers in alleged election fraud. But the remedy lies in a professional army, not a politicized one.



Another landslide threatens village in Montalban

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE SURVIVORS OF THE LANDSLIDE IN Barangay Guinsaugon, St. Bernard, Southern Leyte, have not yet gotten over their grief over the deaths of their relatives and fellow villagers who were buried alive under tons of rocks and soil from the mountains, but here comes another monstrous landslide threatening one more hapless mountainside barangay. This time, the place is not in some remote faraway village. It is very near Greater Manila, within sight of the office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Quezon City. It is a barangay in the hill town of Rodriguez (formerly Montalban), Rizal. It is in danger of being buried in another landslide because of rampant logging and quarrying in the mountains.

Montalban is a historic and beautiful site. It was in its caves and hills that the Katipuneros of Andres Bonifacio bivouacked during the 1896 Revolution. It was also here that American soldiers and Filipino guerrillas fought bloody battles with retreating Japanese soldiers during the battle for Liberation. Thus, it is believed that the Japanese buried some of the legendary Yamashita treasure here; a number of treasure hunters have been in the town digging here and there looking for the treasure.

Montalban is a picturesque, pastoral place with rivers and streams and hills and mountains. It is a favorite picnic spot of foreign and domestic tourists. It is the site of the Wawa Dam which used to be Manila's main source of water. It is within three watersheds: the Marikina Watershed Reservation, the Norzagaray Watershed and the Umiray Watershed. Therefore, it is a protected area.

But the government is not protecting the area—not the DENR, not the local government, or any other government agency. It is the residents of Barangay San Rafael, Montalban—who are at high risk of being buried in case of a landslide—who are trying to protect it. But they are getting no help from the government, although they have repeatedly asked for its help, up to the level of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Montalban had experienced several landslides and flash floods before, from which a number of its residents died. That is why residents are deathly afraid of another landslide, especially with the news of landslides happening in many places in the Philippines and with the warning of Pagasa that La Niña will bring torrential rains and floods even this summer.

Greedy despoilers of the environment are rapidly altering the beautiful landscape of Montalban. Aside from rampant illegal logging in the mountains, quarrying for concrete aggregates is leveling many hills. Dynamite blasting goes on day and night within 29 meters of Sitio AC, San Rafael, at the foot of Mt. Parawagan. In a few more years, there would be no hill left in Montalban, and in nearby Norzagaray, too.

The blasting activities loosen the soil and rocks on the hillsides. During heavy rains, the affected hillsides could dump tons of mud and water to the hundreds of homes below and kill people. What happened at Cherry Hills in nearby Antipolo could be repeated here.

The quarrying also fills up the streams and rivers with silt and mud, causing a damming effect. When the time comes that the dam can no longer hold the water, it could burst and unleash flash floods not only on Montalban but also on nearby San Mateo, Marikina, and even parts of Metro Manila, which have been previously hit by flash floods caused by the silted waterways. The people of Montalban, San Mateo and Marikina have appealed, in a letter to Ms Arroyo, to stop the logging and quarrying. They said they have also appealed to the DENR, Philippine National Police, Ombudsman, National Bureau of Investigation and the Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force. But the appeals have fallen on deaf ears. The loggers and quarry operators are "too powerful."

The Norzagaray Watershed is almost bald. And, people say, there is this "powerful" man who has begun logging in the Umiray Watershed. Several times he was caught in the act of illegal logging by the police and military, but each time he was able to squeeze out of the law's grip. Government officials are afraid of him because he keeps on boasting that he is "a close relative of the President."

Therefore, it is "only you, Ms President, who can stop him," the letter pleaded.

After the December 2004 flash flood that killed at least 15 villagers, the President visited the village and promised to stop logging and quarrying in the area. But these illegal activities continue to this day. And now the residents, who have nowhere else to go, must live under the shadow of death.

In another letter-appeal to the Ombudsman, the people related how they tried to stop the dynamite blasting in Mt. Parawagan, at the foot of which their homes are located. The blasting loosens debris and rocks, some as big as houses, and sends them rolling down the mountainside, people say.

The blasting is being done under the pretext of leveling the mountainside for a "central terminal for jeepneys." But residents say the terminal is unnecessary and can be put elsewhere. But the blasting contractor, who has no permit from the DENR and other government agencies, uses it as an excuse to continue quarrying.

At one instance, ignoring appeals from the people, the contractor's workers planted dynamite in the mountainside. "People power" stopped the workers from detonating the explosives. When they refused to go away, the "powerful official" ordered the workers to go ahead with the blasting. He only backed down when an ABS-CBN television crew arrived and filmed what was going on. Only then did the workers remove the wirings, and leave.

But the danger remains, and the residents are asking GMA, "their President," to save them from certain death.

Power of music

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS, I'm putting up a concert this Thursday, at the Sunken Garden at UP. It's called "Never Again! Concert for Freedom."

I'm no Bob Geldof, or Sir Bob Geldof as he is now known, the famous organizer of Live Aid and Live 8 and the equally famous frontman of the group Boomtown Rats. I am not a musician, though that is not for lack of dreaming or trying. I can claim only to love music. The closest I got to being a musician was when a group of us decided to form a band for a Christmas party, which we called Uband. The name bore no relation to the kind of music U2 plays, it had to do only with the color of our hair, which in my case was still salt and pepper then. Now it's nearly all salt for reasons known only to God. (Maybe he figures it makes me look more like a prophet?) The band was short-lived—we played only that Christmas—for which the musical world is probably thankful. We did a mean version of Crosby, Stills and Nash though. Or so our friends and relations told us.

Many years ago, I also put up a concert like this and for much the same reason. That was in 1999, when Erap pressured The Manila Times to shut down and called for an ad boycott against the INQUIRER. Some 30 bands came to our rescue, determined to defend the freedom of the press. We did it at the Bahay ng Alumni at UP, and drew a pretty big crowd to it. Looking back, I don't know that Erap really understood what he was doing. I doubt if he knew it was unlawful to tell the press what to do.

No such thing with the current squatter in Malacañang. 1017 was a premeditated and deliberate effort to stifle not just the freedom of the press but the freedom of this country generally. Our current concert was originally meant to be a response to it. But 1017's lifting has not made it less compelling. GMA continues to wield powers that screw democracy. Chief of them is EO 464 which gags government officials, civilian and military, from revealing the truth about the last elections. Quite apart from that, cops routinely break up rallies, marches and gatherings, and arrest their leaders. Only last week, they dispersed a rally to celebrate Women's Day and arrested Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel. Adding insult to injury, they called the assault on her person an "invitation." And to this hour, GMA insists on forcing media to obey guidelines of her making.

More importantly, the concert is meant to sound a warning about what can happen if we do not rise to defend ourselves. People who do not value their freedoms are doomed to lose them. Marcos too first tested the waters by suspending the writ of habeas corpus in 1971 in response to the bombing of Plaza Miranda. A year later, he declared martial law, which lasted for 14 years. The prospect of dictatorship continues to dangle on our heads. We do not remove it—or better still let a people's wrath dangle on the head of a would-be dictator—we are going to get it.

Why music? For many reasons. Not least because next to writing, or completely at par with it, music is closest to my heart. I can no more exist without music than I can without writing.

More than that, the media have risen to defend free expression, the lawyers have risen to defend the law, it's time the musicians rose to defend art. The very nature of music—as of writing and painting and any other "art or sullen craft"—as Dylan Thomas puts it, is freedom. Freedom is not just the air art breathes, it is what it is, its essence, its constitution, its every pore. Art cannot flourish under restriction any more than a creature of the wild can thrive in captivity. It can only thrash about violently and howl its misery to the heavens. Our experience with martial law in the past shows the stunting effects of dictatorship on everything it touches, spiritual as much as physical, artistic as much as economic. A friend of mine hit the nail on the head when he said: "Martial law didn't just arrest people, it arrested time. It didn't just arrest the economy, it arrested life."

My original title for the concert was "Never Again: Musicians Against Dictatorship (Mad)!" But I've given in to requests by some musicians that it be changed lest they be construed as having joined an association called Musicians Against Dictatorship. Come to think of it, someone ought to form it—but that falls beyond the scope of this concert. As of last count, the following bands have committed to play with us this Thursday. In order of scheduled appearance, they are: Affinity, Isha, Noli Aurillo, Carol and Sammy (of Pinikpikan), Susan Fernandez and Lester Demetillo, Noel Cabangon, True Faith, Reggae Mistress, The Jerks, Session Road, Brownman Revival, Up Dharma Down, Giniling Festival, Paramita, Grasspipe, Radioactive Sago, Twisted Halo, Bobby Balingit and Juan Isip, Willie Nepomuceno, Leah Navarro, Dong Abay and Pepe Diokno, Cooky Chua and Color It Red (with guest Tots Tolentino), Pinwheel, Bridge, Hemp Republic, Coffeebreak, Agaw Agimat. And counting. My eternal gratitude goes to them.

The concert starts at 5:30 p.m. because some of the bands have gigs to go to after their performance. What can I say?

I believe in the power of music, I do not believe in the music of power. The first rocks, the second sucks.

* * *

We're still frantically raising funds for this. Please get in touch with the following if you wish to contribute to the cause: June Rodriguez, 09206530821 and 4116060 (care of Tonet) and Raffy Albert 09189296786 and 9316575. I can at least assure you your contribution will be accounted for to the last centavo. I want to believe (and show) that honesty is still possible in this country.

Making cities competitive

COMMENTARY

Jigger S Latoza
Institute on Church and Social Issues

LAST FEB. 13, THE AIM (ASIAN INSTITUTE OF Management) Policy Center—with the support of the United States Agency for International Development, The Asia Foundation and the GTZ—presented to the public the findings of the 2005 Philippine Cities Competitiveness Ranking Project (PCCRP). Declared as the country's most competitive cities were: metro cities—Davao, Las Piñas, Makati, Marikina and Muntinlupa; mid-sized cities—Bacolod, Batangas, Iligan, Iloilo and San Fernando (Pampanga); small cities—Dagupan, Koronadal, Legazpi, Naga, Olongapo, San Fernando (La Union), Sta. Rosa, Surigao, Tagbilaran and Tagum.

For a backgrounder: The PCCRP assesses the capacity of cities to provide an environment that nurtures the dynamism of local enterprises and industries, the general ability of cities to attract investments, entrepreneurs and residents, and to uplift the living standards of their inhabitants. To measure competitiveness, the project looks into the indicators of "competitiveness drivers": cost of doing business, dynamism of local economy, linkages and accessibility, human resources and training, infrastructure, responsiveness of local government to business needs, and quality of life. The PCCRP also provides a benchmarking process that will aid individual cities in measuring competitiveness.

As head of the University of San Agustin (Iloilo) Research Center, which has been the PCCRP research partner in Western Visayas since 2001, I am glad to echo here the best practices of the 20 (out of the 65 surveyed) cities declared as most competitive. These were first articulated by Dr. Federico Macaranas, executive director of the AIM Policy Center.

Foremost, according to Macaranas, is the appreciation of the fact that the "Basics Form the Bedrock" of competitiveness. The provision of adequate infrastructure—roads and bridges, power, water, telecommunications, among others, is a requisite of competitiveness. While there is certainly nothing wrong with dreaming big for one's city, neglect of these basics can effectively block a city's drive to realize its development vision.

Next are the "One Stroke, One Shop" best practices. These, Macaranas says, complement infrastructure in bringing down the cost of business through quick and simplified responses from government. Falling under this cluster of best practices are strategies for investment promotion and the operation of business one-stop-shop centers. Also cited are cities that have gone the extra mile in facilitating things for investors/businesspersons by going electronic in transactions—downloadable forms and documents (including bids), on-line availability of procedures, point persons and contact information and on-line processing.

Macaranas refers to the next set of best practices as following the "Law of Numbers." He stresses the value of accurate and timely collection of statistics—to competitiveness; and more importantly, the imperative for statistical information for policymaking and executive decision-making. He also notes the critical need of many cities to build up capacity in systematically collecting, monitoring and interpreting data. I think this is where collaboration on knowledge management between cities and universities/research institutions assumes great importance.

Competitive cities also have what Macaranas terms the "Stickiness Factor." These are cities where ideas animate people toward action, cities where the local leadership engages the constituency by organizing forums and meetings, and optimizing the mass media and other means of communication for participatory governance. These are cities where the average citizen knows by heart the city's vision statement and development objectives.

Finally, Macaranas says, competitive cities use the "Power of Context." These are cities where leaders agree with Gladwell that "the key to getting people to change their behavior sometimes lies with the smallest details of their immediate situation." In other words, while the city leadership motivates the people to think big, it does not overlook seemingly micro matters, such as garbage collection, traffic management, health and emergency response services, transparency and performance standards.

Basics form the bedrock. One stroke, one shop. The law of numbers. The stickiness factor. The power of context.

The best practices of competitive cities just cited may well be considered not only by other cities but also by provinces and municipalities, particularly capital towns. After all, becoming competitive is not the ultimate end; rather, it is only a means toward a higher goal—that is, attaining prosperity through better public service. This, no doubt, is an aspiration shared by all local government units, regardless of size.

The conspiracy

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Noralyn Mustafa

ON THE EVE OF THE FIRST DEATH ANNIVERsary of Fernando Poe Jr. last December, I stayed up until past 3 a.m. watching his movie "Agila." I had chanced upon it on Cinema One as I surfed the channels for something to keep the TV on while doing some writing. I stayed there out of curiosity. But half an hour into the film I had to stop writing and, when the end credits came on, I sat there feeling so ashamed of myself for having seen only "Lo Waist Gang."

It was a strange feeling I had—alone with my naked thoughts in the bare, clean dark hours of the morning, that make one see with crystal clarity things he or she could be blind to in the harsh light of day. A year after his death, I got a glimpse of the character of the man who could have been president of this country, and he spoke to me through the medium he knew best, baring his soul as he shared his vision of a more decent world.

Fernando Poe Jr. was Daniel Agila. Daniel fought the lions. And Kahlil Gibran's eagle, to fly high, had to fly without its nest.

For his ultimate production, Poe tried to make Agila live his vision in the real world. So he acted it out, according to the terms of Agila. He was reviled and ridiculed for being inadequate—a high school dropout, totally without experience in both politics and governance, and worst of all, he was "a mere actor." Still, he played it out as Agila. Even when, according to the Commission on Elections of Benjamin Abalos, he lost in the elections, he went around to thank the people who had supported him in his bid for the presidency. But the functionaries of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo reminded him that you don't do such things in the real world.

They spooked him with "intelligence reports" that the New People's Army and other dark forces were out to kill him. For what, it was not clear.

Deep in his heart, like most people, Poe knew he had won the elections. So he tried to prove it according to the rules of Agila. He filed a protest although deep in his heart, too, he knew that it was an exercise in futility.

And it was here that the distinct difference between the real and the celluloid, between Poe and Agila manifested itself. Confronted with defeat and frustration, Agila was more fortunate. Going blind and almost infirm, he withdrew to the mountains and renewed his body and soul among those closest to the earth, planting and hunting for sustenance, communicating mostly with infinite truths. Which in the real world, ironically, should be the obvious option.

But in what was supposed to be the real world where Fernando Poe Jr. existed, where make-believe, dictated the rules, resignation was tragic. He chose to die.

It was then as I sat there, trying to fathom the mystery of it all, that I recalled what former Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman disclosed in an interview, with remorse and guilt: she said she did what she did to help Ms Arroyo win the presidency because she was "afraid that another actor would become president."

Although one may not completely agree with how she justified her going around among squatter areas and slums in the guise of carrying out her functions but actually spying on poor folk on areas where a survey was to be conducted to get an "early warning system" and then to magically transform the findings into "military intelligence," one could believe that her fear of actors as presidents was real.

I can attest to this myself. Dinky, at least as far as I am concerned, was as much if not more the hero, of the so-called Edsa II than either Cory Aquino, Fidel Ramos, Jose de Venecia or even Ms Arroyo. In the last two days before Ms Arroyo grabbed the presidency from Joseph Estrada, it was Dinky's name on everyone's lips.

Although still with fever, cough and a runny nose, I had to finish a manifesto that a Muslim women's group, of which I was a member had asked me to write because it had to be submitted to Dinky, who at that point I wouldn't have known from Ms Arroyo.

At a store in the UP shopping center where I was looking for a black T-shirt for my daughter to wear at Edsa (my black INQUIRER T-shirt printed with the witty slogan in reply to Erap's call for advertisers to boycott the paper was good enough for me), two women, also shopping for the same, asked me whether I was joining Dinky's group.

"I'm joining him," I replied as I approached Gary Granada (who I guessed was trying to bargain with the sales clerk over several shirts) and asked him to autograph one that I had selected as *pasalubong* for an activist-son; the one printed with the oft-quoted line of the Philippine Collegian's editor in chief, Abraham Sarmiento Jr., in his famous editorial: "*Kung hindi tayo kikilos, sino pa? Kung hindi ngayon, kailan pa?*" Gary didn't just autograph it, he wrote a short message: "*Kapatid, tuloy lang.*" Which inspired me to buy the double-tape set of "Lean" who, like Gary, had a place in my son's pantheon of "idols."

Dinky was able to gather thousands of the hundreds of thousands who unwittingly became the persuasive props that convinced the television audience that this was Edsa II. But, in my observation, Edsa II was not an authentic people power movement.

Looking for something to drink in the heat, I wormed my way through the thick crowd until I got under the flyover where vendors were selling food and drinks. Then my attention was caught by a very fair, plump lady with golden hair furiously fanning herself, sweating all over, gasping for breath, visibly unable to contain her excitement as she told a group of similar types, obviously waiting for her reports: "*Andoon na, andoon na si Reyes, inutusan na ni FVR, umalis na sa Linden.*"

Dinky, look now upon your country and weep.

***

Comments to rubaiyat19@yahoo.com

Managing expectations

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY "AIDE DE CAMP TO Freedom," Teodoro M. Kalaw recalled Manuel L. Quezon explaining his political success to his friend and rival Sergio Osmeña: "The trouble with you is that you take this game of politics too seriously. You look far behind you and too far ahead of you. Our people do not understand that. They do not want it. All they want is to have the present problem solved, and solved with the least pain. That is all."

Even Vice President Noli de Castro admits: there is a problem, and the problem is a President who has a lot of explaining to do, but won't do it. How can the problem be solved with the least pain?

Some citizens—e.g., former NFA Administration Romeo David (reportedly, writing anonymously) and S.C. Austero—have taken to letter-writing in defense of the "let's move on" mentality: the least pain involves the least effort, which means defending the status quo—which also suggests that what they put forward is not even a solution.

I believe there is a broader consensus—one which crosses socio-economic lines—on a solution to the present problem. That is, a presidential election of some kind. The INQUIRER has proposed a referendum; many others have called for a snap election, whether involving the President or not, but aimed at one thing: to finally achieve an indisputable mandate for whoever the country sees fit to have as chief executive.

But it would be wrong not to admit that the so-called middle-class solution is an entirely different kind of solution, one made easier because the solution's already here: that is, essentially, the President. As a colleague put it to me the other night, "If you have a President who lies, cheats and steals, it makes life easy for everybody, because now everyone can lie, cheat and steal with a clear conscience."

After all, he explained, what is important in our society is not whether or not you do something bad, but whether you live according to the acceptable limits of improper behavior. What are those limits? Only that you keep up appearances and share the wealth. Machiavelli wrote: "It is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them. And I shall dare to say this also, that to have them and always to observe them is injurious, and that to appear to have them is useful; to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite .... For this reason a prince ought to take care that he never lets anything slip from his lips that is not replete with the above-named five qualities, that he may appear to him who sees and hears him altogether merciful, faithful, humane, upright, and religious."

The secret of the President, it thus seems to me, is that she perfectly understands what keeps our society functioning—appearances. Another Machiavellian observation aptly explains why the present dispensation has managed to be fairly successful in appealing to its kindred spirits in our society: "It is wiser to have a reputation for meanness which brings reproach without hatred, than to be compelled through seeking a reputation for liberality to incur a name for rapacity which begets reproach with hatred."

The things that separate the so-called middle class from the very poor and the very wealthy, my wise colleague further suggested, are these: they have enough money and property to worry about losing them, but not enough of either to be in a position to adequately defend them. They need government for that; so long as government pledges to protect them from the encroachment of the very poor, it doesn't matter what the utterly well-to-do actually engage in, so long as the middle remains insulated. That is a characteristic of all middle-class constituencies everywhere. That is why they can be comfortable with violence aimed at the poor and desperate majority, and with a healthy dose of persecution aimed at the fantastically rich minority.

In the end, it comes down to something that again crosses socioeconomic lines: my colleague's final point, something we can call the need to manage expectations. Very few Filipinos are obsessed with wanting to change things—why waste time, energy and effort when things, after all, work pretty well? The trick is to assume nothing works, so that when things do, it's a delight. In this manner, the slowness and the inefficiency of all things become acceptable, because there is always a solution to every problem, entailing the least pain. People have gone through life learning the ins and outs, and by so doing, manage to carve out for themselves some kind of existence which, if it could be better, at least might not be worse than it is.

The poor citizen can occupy someone else's land, and be rewarded by a government title to it. If expelled from the land, government-provided land can be expected, and there is money and rice and jobs in exchange for votes. The middle-class person, offended by the idea of applying private moral standards to public service, is unwilling to give up either the security that comes from knowing—and using—every shortcut to avoid really having to follow the rules, or the comfort that comes from knowing that any obstacle thrown up by officialdom is ever permanent. The very wealthy person knows the same thing, and can enjoy the fact that, provided private sins do not become public scandal, all things are negotiable.

With a President who personifies all these things, our republic can be said not only to be strong, but also complete.

***

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph/blog

Quality education

COMMENTARY

Eugenia Duran-Apostol

IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE WORDS OF C. WRIGHT MILLS—"I have tried to be objective; I cannot claim to be detached." Or it could have been the idea of an Education Revolution that made last week's commentary a hit. I have never had such an immediate, wide response to anything that I have written the past 60 years.

Iris Stephanie Buhay, a graduate of De La Salle University now studying in Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, e-mailed: "The better education we could provide our countrymen, the easier and faster our development shall be."

Midelfio Ed Nibungco, a certified public accountant at the MTA Audit Services in New York City wrote: "I cannot help but admire you and your organization for being able to form a better alternative to Edsa People Power."

Linda Nietes, originally from Antique and now working out of Rancho Palos Verdes in California, wants to know how she can get involved in the Mentoring the Mentors Program for Antique "without getting involved in the politics of my province."

Sam Dignadice, the president of the Council of Auckland Philippine Organizations, said he "read this article and got very excited about this."

Bobbit Mariano of St. Albans, Victoria commented: "[I]n Melbourne, Australia, every suburb has its own community library ... how I wish every barangay in the Philippines had their own community library."

Stephen Medel wrote: "[I]t is tragic that everyone is screaming at the top of their voices with no one listening...how I wish people would just do their part in a more silent and civil way as you are doing."

Exequiel Abad Santos from Angeles City said: "I agree: the real world is not outside but within ourselves. But who is C. Wright Mills who has made a lasting impression on you?"

Well Exequiel, Charles Wright Mills (Aug. 20, 1916 Waco, Texas-March 20, 1962 Nyack, New York) was an American sociologist. He "was concerned with the responsibilities of intellectuals in post-World War II society and advocated relevance and engagement over disinterested academic observation." For a quick online overview of the man and his life work, try Wikipedia on the Internet.

There are quite a few more names that I wish we had the space to mention, but to everyone who took the time to write me, my heartfelt thanks.

Every Philippine Constitution ever promulgated affirms the Filipino citizen's right to quality education that is "relevant to the needs of the people and society." In particular, the 1987 Constitution, ratified after Edsa I, provides for "free public education in the elementary and high school levels" with elementary education being compulsory for school-age children.

Does this mean then that quality education is the sole concern of government?

In its latest undertaking called the "Schools First Initiative," the Department of Education identified the apparent alienation of public schools from the community as a major factor in the sub-par overall academic performance of today's public school students.

It is not that parents and education stakeholders outside the public school system are unconcerned. On the contrary, if all those letters I received are any indication, everybody who cares for our country genuinely wants to help make our public school system better, in any way they can.

It is just that to the casual observer—like parents whose attention are held by other pressing matters such as making ends meet—the problems facing public education seem so complex as to be practically unsolvable.

It may be true that the public school system's delivery of quality education to its students suffers due to substandard facilities and overworked, underpaid and inadequately trained teachers.

These problems, however, are not insurmountable. There are a couple of things that we can do to get the ball called Education Revolution rolling.

As we found out in Edsa 1986, people were moved to action as they became fully aware of what was going on. Back then, despite the choke hold that Marcos had over the mainstream press, the truth found a way to make itself known. We had no cellular phones and SMS and e-mail during those days but we made do with "Xerox journalism" and a makeshift newspaper distribution system that ran mostly on sheer nerve and creativity.

We all know what happened.

We can do the same thing now for public education, and this time we have a lot of high-tech tools that we can use to focus the attention of our respective communities to this issue. Today, being in different continents is no longer a barrier to effective and instantaneous communication.

It is much easier now to make people in our respective communities aware of how a good education system directly affects community life. The equation is simple: better education equals better opportunities.

For instance, in Naga City, people were able to make significant improvement in their public school students' overall academic performance after Mayor Jesse Robredo conducted a campaign to make parents and education stakeholders aware that their public schools needed their help. A lot of Bicolanos living abroad, who were originally from Naga City, pitched in, not just by donating material resources but also by sharing their knowledge and expertise.

The next step is a major one.

You all must have heard of the African proverb that Hillary Clinton often quotes: "It takes an entire village to educate the child."

For our purposes, this adage takes shape through the Education Working Group which is made up of education stakeholders (who understand the issue and want to help) and a well-motivated school head. This group drafts a "plan for success," where success means sustained academic achievement. Every community is different, so the emerging strategic plans are equally varied, but they all have one objective: to improve learning outcomes in the major core subjects.

Two things here are truly revolutionary: the active engagement of the entire community and the development of a plan that is premised on performance. There are many terms that community development experts use to describe these steps. For me, they simply mean "People Power" being exercised on the next level.

(You may send e-mail to the author at execdir@fwwpp.org.)

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Tomorrow, a new government

THE QUOTATION FROM KARL Marx that Randy David used to end his analysis of failed leadership deserves further analysis. (PDI, 2/26/06) Marx's conclusion that events and personages occur at least twice in history—the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce—actually indicts Marxism more harshly than it does Philippine politics.

The failure of all Marxist governments around the world as a form of governance needs no further debate. We all know that deterministic theories on human economy have failed to predict the collapse of communism due to their mechanistic interpretation of human value. And this is also the reason why we are not able to move beyond people power: we can only manage to determine how to unseat a failed government, not build a successful one.

If all the heroism and energies of the people trying to unseat Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo were used tonight to build an economically and morally viable alternative to the Arroyo administration, we would have a new government tomorrow.

—IKE ESLAO,
ikeeslao@yahoo.com

Appalled by the message of let-Gloria-be advocates

I AM APPALLED BY PEOPLE WHO suggest that Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo should be allowed to finish her term because advocating her ouster hurts our economy, or because the presidents before her were just as bad.

In the first place, the presidents before her won their elections legitimately, fair and square.

Second, if we are concerned about the kind of message we're sending out to local and foreign investors by marching in protest, then shouldn't we be more concerned about what kind of message we're sending out to our children if we don't? Legitimacy may not always yield better lives for people or a better economy, but it surely gives people a reassuring sense of justice, fairness and integrity.

Third, it is not merely the right but the obligation of a citizen to speak out for change. It is our duty to look out for our nation and not to succumb to apathy.

—GRETCHEN LEGASPI,
gretchen_legaspi@yahoo.com

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Using violence to stay in power

"THE DIE IS CAST. THE STEP IS taken and I cannot draw back." So said Julius Caesar when he crossed the Rubicon with his army, in defiance of the Roman Senate. He went on to become a benign dictator and the Senate became powerless.

The President of the Philippines has cast the die but she lacks the brilliance, forcefulness and intelligence of Caesar, attributes that drew the people of Rome to him. Ms Arroyo has stumbled badly.

Only dictators use the military and police to stay in power and in the end they lose. Only her intimates and appointees support her, and they are not enough to save her (and themselves) from ignominy.

—ROBERT HANAN,
robhanan@robhanan.com

LETTERS PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Most serious woe next to poverty

THE DEMOLITION OF THE SO-called "shabu mall" in Pasig City struck me as a big surprise. It was done reportedly because the area had become a nuisance. The Civil Code defines nuisance as any act, omission, establishment, condition of property, or anything else which:

(1) injures or endangers the health or safety of others; (2) annoys or offends the senses; (3) shocks, defies or disregards decency or morality; (4) obstructs or interferes with the free passage of any public highway or street, or any body of water; or (5) hinders or impairs the use of property.

Under normal circumstances, the demolition would have been laudable because the structures were illegal. What was surprising or abnormal about it was its timing and the fact that it was conducted by city officials led by Pasig Mayor Vicente Eusebio himself.

The "mall," which is near the City Hall, was in existence for quite some time. It was a nuisance, all right. But if not for its discovery as a front for an elaborate and organized drug trade, would it have been demolished?

Was the legal term "nuisance" used just to give the demolition a semblance of legality? Or was it really an attempt to destroy damaging pieces of evidence?

I am writing this as a concerned citizen of this country. Next to poverty, the drug menace is perhaps the most serious problem our country faces today.

—RUBEN C. ROZAL,
49 Kamias Rd., Quezon City

A worthy instrument of God

WE HUMBLY ACCEPTED WITH tears God's will when Paul and Michael Quintos were killed.

We had believed that true justice could not be obtained in this world. However, we did not abandon the quest for truth and justice. The lives subsequently sacrificed—NBI agent Arnel Garcia, PO3 Leopoldo Mulingbayan, PNP Supt. Winston Ebersole, Vice Mayor Abeleda and farmworkers Restituto Perol, Dennis de Jesus, Manolo Gomez, Rolando Villa, Danilo Pilingon—demanded that we did everything humanly possible to ensure that truth would be achieved.

This chosen road to truth and justice was difficult and painful. Our family suffered so much, and with us, the families of those who also lost their lives. But we kept our faith in God. Finally, the court of justice proved itself a worthy instrument of God, and truth prevailed!

—DING AND AGNES QUINTOS

Non-Liberals in Atienza convention

BELINDA OLIVARES-CUNANAN should double-check her facts on the number of Liberal Party board members and municipal mayors from Iloilo province who supposedly joined the sham election held by Manila Mayor Lito Atienza at the Manila Hotel. (PDI, 3/7/06)

There wasn't a single Liberal Party board member from Iloilo in that assembly. Only four Iloilo board members were there—three Lakas-CMD members; the fourth had been expelled from the Liberal Party in November 2004. The 11 municipal mayors from Iloilo who were there were all members of Lakas. In fact, this group led by Concepcion Mayor Raul Banias walked out of the assembly after the elections.

Let me emphasize that among the four Liberal Party governors in Panay island and Guimaras, only Gov. Sally Zaldivar-Perez of Antique participated in that activity. The entire Liberal Party hierarchy in the provinces of Iloilo, Capiz and Guimaras stand solidly behind the leadership of Senate President Franklin Drilon. This solid base of support extends to all municipal mayors, vice mayors and Sangguniang Bayan members belonging to the Liberal Party.

Hence, it's wrong for Cunanan to say that Drilon has only a few troops on the ground. Western Visayas is proud to be known as the bastion of the Liberal Party, and its leaders and members recognize no other party president except Drilon.

—MANUEL P. MEJORADA,
provincial administrator,
Office of the Provincial Administrator,
3/F New Iloilo Provincial Capitol,
Iloilo City

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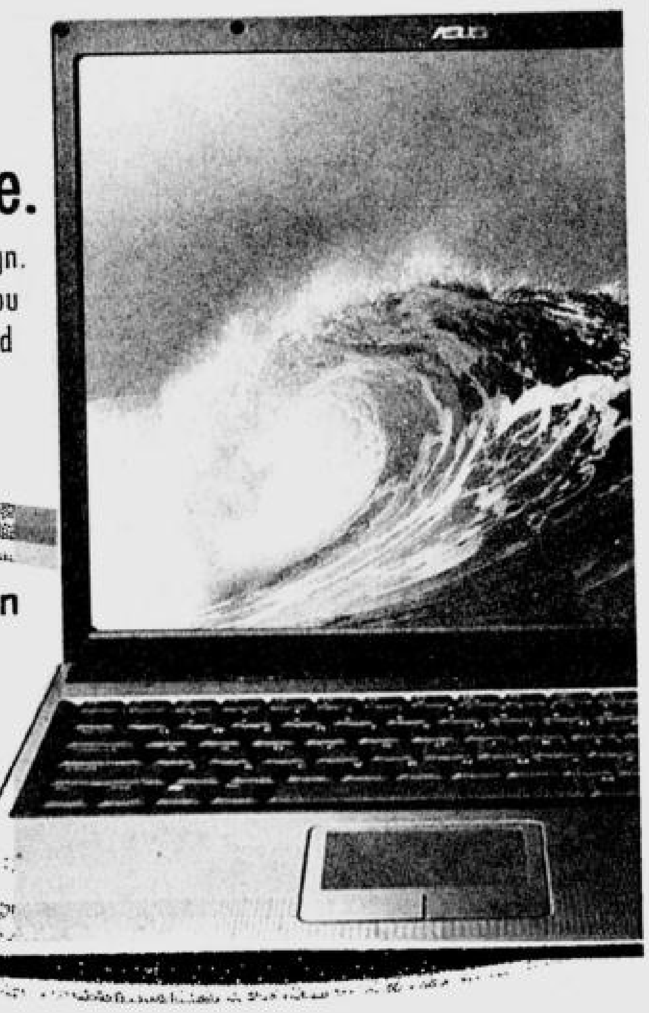

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The **PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY, Port District Office - Visayas**, through its Bids and Awards Committee - Engineering Project (BAC-EP), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract:

A: Name of Contract : **Construction of Tourist Assistance Center**
Location : Port of Tagbilaran, Tagbilaran City
Brief Description : Construction of 1-storey Building
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) : P6,269,679.46
Source of Funds : PPA Corporate Fund
Contract Duration : One Hundred Fifty (**150**) Calendar Days
PCAB Registration : **Small B** "Building & Industrial Plant"
Required Equipments :

1)	1 unit	6 Wheeler Truck	- Owned/Leased
2)	2 units	Bar Cutter	- Owned
3)	2 units	One Bagger Concrete Mixer	- Owned
4)	2 units	Concrete Vibrator	- Owned
5)	1 unit	Compressor w/ spray gun	- Owned
6)	1 unit	Concrete Cutter	- Owned/Leased
7)	1 unit	Oxy-Acetylene Cutting Outfit	- Owned/Leased
8)	1 unit	Compressor w/ Jackhammer	- Owned/Leased
9)	1 unit	Welding Machine	- Owned
10)	1 unit	Plate Compactor	- Owned/Leased

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB license and registration particulars applicable to the type and cost of the contract to be bid, have key personnel and equipment available for the prosecution of the contract, must have completed a contract/project similar in nature and complexity to the contract to be bid within the past **Five (5) years** immediately preceding the publication of this invitation with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and meet the other eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Statement. Applications for eligibility, as well as the preliminary examination of bids, will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" criteria. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid. In accordance with the IRR-A of RA 9184, a contract will be awarded only to the lowest calculated and responsive bidder.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC Activities	Schedule
1. Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	March 13-24, 2006
2. Issuance of Eligibility Forms	March 13-31, 2006
3. Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	April 7, 2006

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas, CIP Complex, Serging Osmeña Blvd., North Reclamation Area, Cebu City upon their submission of a LOI, and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of **P1,100.00** (inclusive of VAT) to the Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas Cashier. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check by the BAC at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for the bidding upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **P2,500.00** (inclusive of VAT) to the Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas Cashier.

The Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to the award of contract without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) **JAMES J. GANTALAO**
BAC Chairman

(PDI - March 4 & 13, 2006)

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Across the NATION

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2 cargo vessels collide; 17,000 bags of rice sink

By Leila B. Salaverria, *in Manila*
and Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

A CARGO VESSEL CARRYING about 17,000 bags of rice and 22 people sank off the Cebu Harbor on Saturday after colliding with another vessel, according to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

The MV Premship-X sank near the North Entrance of the Cebu Harbor, or about 1.5 nautical miles off the PKS Shipyard in Tayud, Consolacion, after colliding with the MV Mihara II about 6 p.m. on Saturday, according to a report from the PCG.

All four officers and 18 crew members of the ill-fated vessel were saved, with the MV Mihara II helping in the rescue operations. However, the bags of rice were not retrieved.

PCG operatives from its Cebu station who went to the accident site after receiving a distress call found the MV Premship-X submerged in water.

According to the PCG, the incident occurred while the MV Premship-X was on its way to Catbalogan, Eastern Samar. The MV Mihara II, on the other hand, was on its way to the PKS shipyard for minor repairs.

The PCG has sent a team from its Marine Environmental Protection Command to the site of the accident to check for any threat of an oil spill and, should it find any, to implement preventive measures.

A special board of marine inquiry will convene today to determine what caused the incident. Both vessels have submitted their marine protests at the Cebu Coast Guard Station in Pier 3.

"We will find out the cause of the collision. Initially, the crew of Mihara claimed that they were about to maneuver towards the PKS shipyard when Premship hit their vessel," said Coast Guard Station commander Manolito Malig-on.

Based on the initial report, MV Premship-X left Cebu City port at 6 p.m. on Saturday, as it was hired by the National Food Authority in Cebu to transport the rice to Catbalogan, Samar.

At that time, Mihara II came from Iligan City and was heading for PKS Shipyard in Consolacion for a dry-docking while Premship-X was sailing out of Cebu to Samar.

MV Mihara-11 skipper Jovencio Granados said their ship was on the right course when Premship-X allegedly hit the port side (left side) of their vessel.

"The incident happened because Premship passed the wrong way," Granados told the INQUIRER.

He added Premship-X sunk 30 minutes after the collision. Its 22 crew members jumped off the vessel and were rescued by the four officers and 18 crew members of Mihara.

Granados was at the Coast Guard office to submit his marine protest. He was with his chief mate Ramon Uy, radio operator Deogracias Fernandez and another crew member Mario Ponce.

The INQUIRER called up the office of Premier Shipping Lines yesterday but nobody answered the phone.

An NFA official who asked not to be named, said the shipment was among the imported rice that arrived last week from Vietnam.

POT DANCE EV ESPIRITU

This is Kalinga's little known "pot dance," but it shows little of the actual rice culture in the province. In Sitio Canao of Lubuagan town, community farmers only produce rice for their own consumption.

LP split reaches Quezon politicians

LUCENA CITY—THE split among Liberal Party national officials has also seeped into the ranks of party members in Quezon.

During the LP-Quezon provincewide assembly held here on Thursday, only three congressmen—Rafael Nantes (1st District), Proceso Alcala (2nd District) and Lorenzo Tañada III (4th District)—showed up.

Notably absent during the whole-day affair was Rep. Danilo Suarez (3rd District), his wife former Rep. Aleta Suarez and son Quezon Vice Gov. David Suarez. All family members belong to the 60-year-old political party.

"I was not informed of the meeting. I was not invited," Suarez said over the phone.

Nantes, the LP-Quezon chair and national treasurer of the party, said "Suarez has long severed his ties with LP members in Quezon."

"The LP leadership in Quezon has long been extending its hand to the Suarezes to unite the party but they have been ignoring our efforts. We have to move even without them to strengthen the party," Nantes said.

Suarez is associated with the camp of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza while Nantes, Alcala and Tañada are all declared supporters of Senate President Frank Drilon, the LP national president.

Atienza, the party national chair, initiated a meeting with a motley group of LP members last month, which eventually elected him as the party president to replace Drilon.

Drilon's camp protested and called the Atienza-initiated meeting as a "rump convention." *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

GMA tells bishop: No divorce, abortion laws

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Moves to legalize divorce and abortion will not prosper in the Philippines as long as Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is President.

That's because on Thursday she gave her opposition to these as her "best birthday gift" to Archbishop Paciano Aniceto, chair of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' commission on family life.

Speaking in Kapampangan toward the end of the Mass held for Aniceto's 69th birthday, the President said: "We are taking measures to strengthen the Filipino family. Perhaps this will be the best birthday gift I can offer you."

She made no reference to House Bill No. 3773 on population management.

For the first time, she publicly acknowledged that the bishop has been a "very important adviser to me in the population policy of our government."

Ms Arroyo said she first consulted him about population and family issues in 2001 for the policies she had announced during that year's celebration of women's month.

She said she also consulted with Aniceto on her choices of secretary to head the Department of Health.

The Philippine population policy that she presented to the United Nations' interfaith dialog and general assembly in September 2005 was also "inspired" by the advice of the archbishop, she said.

"Perhaps that's why you were on the women's month," she said of what she called his valuable guidance and insights.

"These past days I have been reflecting on what I shall say on this women's month. I have put together a few thoughts, which providentially, again, that why's I will have to go back to Manila. I will be having a meeting with female Cabinet members and female government officials and after, a statement will be forthcoming to reiterate some of our important policies about family, population and women's rights," Ms Arroyo said.

"I will affirm that, I should say it is that I should declare that a strong family makes for a strong republic," she added, to the loud applause of some 3,000 Catholics.

Telling reporters what transpired in his 10-minute closed-door meeting with the President, Aniceto said: "She said that as a Catholic, I will never approve of any bill like [on] abortion or divorce." *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

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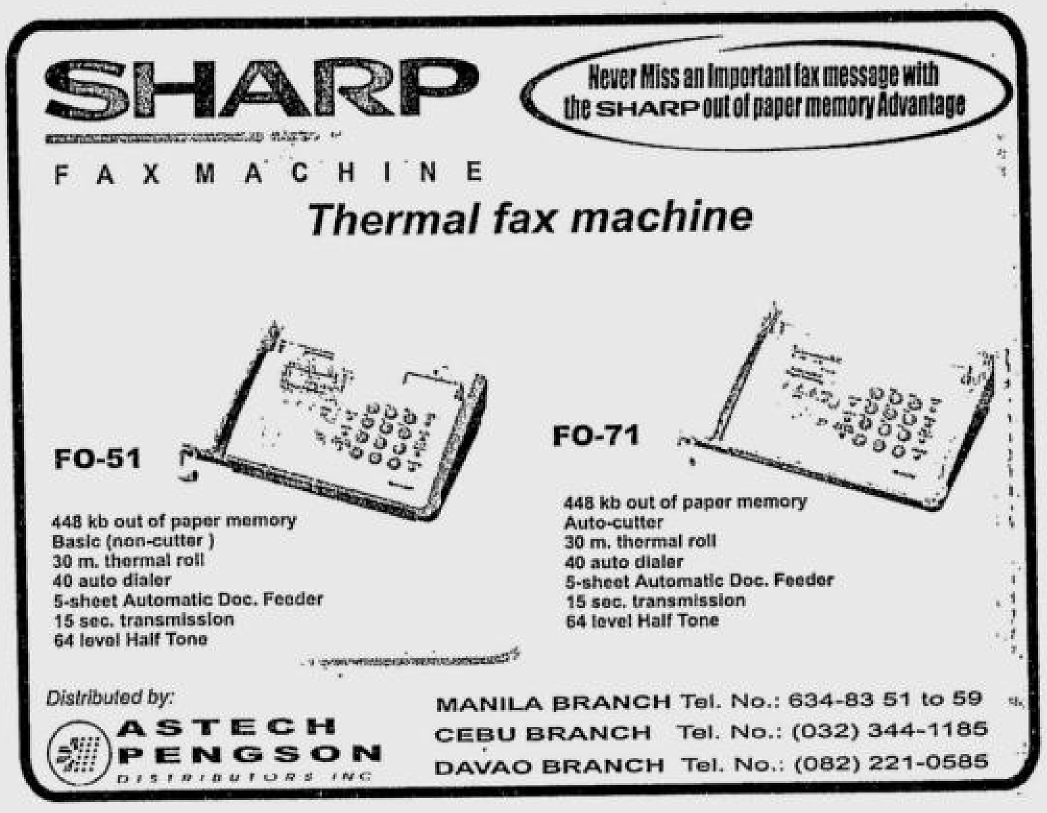

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Mining to remain growth driver, Reyes says

By Blanche S. Rivera

WHILE IT PUSHED FOR THE REview of the controversial Mining Act of 1995, the government reiterated that a revitalized mining industry would remain one of the economic growth drivers under the Arroyo administration.

Government officials led by newly appointed Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes continued to promote the Philippines as a mine-rich country in major international events.

Reyes, who just came back from the Prospectors and Developers Conference (PADC) in Canada, said there was much interest in mining prospects in the Philippines during the event attended by 91 countries.

"Mining is a growth driver ... We understand the bishops' concerns, but they are only against irresponsible mining, not mining per se, and we will never tolerate the destruction of our environment," said Reyes, who accompanied President Macapagal-Arroyo in her meeting with bishops last week.

The Philippines took an active part in the PADC for the first time this year, Reyes said. It had a lecture room explaining the mining potential in the country and had one of 1,000 booths in the conference.

"Those already doing explorations here want to sell their permits to the big boys. Of course we asked them to impose the same rigid standards they have in their countries," Reyes said.

He said the government will continue to issue exploration permits but will focus its promotion on the development of the 24 priority mining sites, which alone could yield up to $8 billion in investments.

"That should be enough for now," the new DENR chief said during a dinner-meeting with the press Saturday.

He said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will also review existing logging and mining permits issued by the government.

He wanted to find out which firms who have secured permits to log or mine were actually developing their concession areas, he added.

Reyes said there might be some "speculators" who were merely holding on to their permits without initiating substantial development so that they can sell their concessions to a bigger firm.

"There will be a continuing review of forestry agreements as well as mining permits. We cannot let them sit on their claims ... You either use it or lose it," he said.

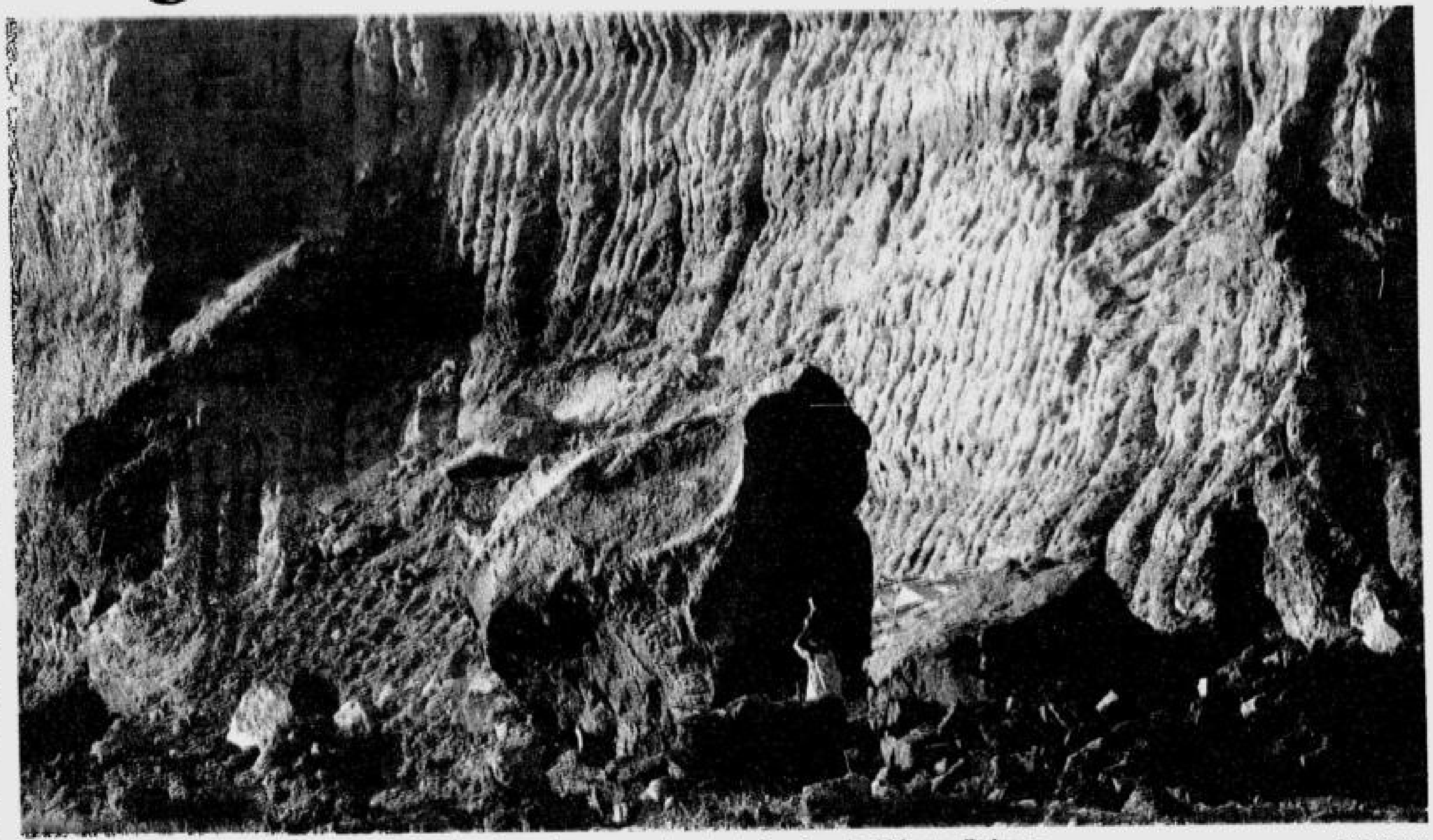
The DENR has also offered to assist the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Phils. in reviewing the Mining Act. The CBCP has called for the repeal of the Mining Law and a moratorium on the issuance of new mining permits.

"We will do that together. If there are improvements in the mining law, the DENR will also propose changes ... We want to ensure that mining laws will result in social equity," Reyes said.

Reyes' statement came as environmental activists cautioned the CBCP against trusting the promises of the President, Reyes and House Speaker Jose de Venecia, who met with bishops actively opposing mining in their areas.

"While reiterating our support to the CBCP, we also call on them to remain vigilant with the Arroyo administration's mining undertakings and firm on their patriotic positions," Clemente Bautista, national coordinator of Kalikasan-People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan-PNE), said in a statement.

Kalikasan said the CBCP should stick to the call for the repeal of the Mining Act of 1995, issuance of a moratorium on large-scale mining operations and cancellation of the 24 mining priority projects.



A MAN breaks down large boulders to smaller pieces in a quarrying site in San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan. RAFFY LERMA

Groups seek court action vs Vizcaya mining project

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—Antimining groups on Wednesday asked the court to compel Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes to revoke the environmental compliance certificate (ECC) that his agency has issued to a planned gold-copper mining project of an Australian company in the province.

About 150 officials and residents of Didipio village in Kasibu town, together with members of civil society led by Catholic Bishop Ramon Villena, trooped to the regional trial court here to file the petition against Reyes and the Australasian Philippines Mining Inc. (APMI).

They said they sought court action after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources refused to cancel the ECC, despite the company's alleged failure to comply with requirements for its large-scale mining venture in Didipio.

But Jerrysal Mangaoang, regional director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau here, downplayed the petition for mandamus filed by Kasibu officials and residents.

A petition for mandamus is a remedial action asking the court to compel a firm or a person to perform a specific duty that it is obliged to do.

"[A petition for] mandamus is a remedy of last resort and is applicable only to ministerial actions [of administrative bodies]. The issuance of an ECC is a discretionary power of the DENR," he said.

Jose Leviste, APMI board chair, declined to comment, saying he had yet to study the contents of the petition.

The ECC was issued in August 2004 by former Secretary Elisea Gozun to APMI, then known as Climax Arimco Mining Corp.

APMI's gold-copper project aims to process about four million ounces of gold and 1.5 billion ounces of copper deposits in Didipio within 14 years.

Mary Ann de la Peña, the petitioners' lawyer, cited the failure of APMI to get the consent of local communities. *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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Iloilo village closely watched for landslides

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIronment and Natural Resources Mines and Geosciences Bureau (DENR-MGB) has ordered the close monitoring of a hinterland village in Iloilo over threats of a landslide.

Rolando Calumarde, chief geologist of the MGB in Western Visayas, said they advised residents and officials of Alimodian town, about 25 km south of here, to monitor soil movements in Barangay Umingan due to continued occurrences of minor landslides.

The village is about 32 km from the town proper and straddles the border of Iloilo and Antique provinces. It has 84 households with a population of around 400.

Reports

Calumarde said an MGB team and members of the Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council (MDCC) and other representatives of the municipal government went to the area last week after receiving reports from Umingan barangay chair Rodrigo Cagud of the landslides.

Cagud reported that a large crack had been formed near the Initayan River because of the landslides. But Calumarde said the crack was not visible anymore when they inspected the area.

"This shows that there is a continued movement in the soil," Calumarde said in a telephone interview.

He said the village sits on the West Panay Fault, one of the most active earthquake faults in Western Visayas.

Porous soil

"The soil and rock structure is highly porous and weak which accounts for the rampant occurrence of landslides," he said.

Calumarde said the landslides, which have already been occurring even without rainfall, could become more frequent when the soil and rocks are loosened with the advent of the rainy season brought by the La Niña.

La Niña is a weather phenomenon characterized by above normal level of rainfall.

The MGB has advised the MDCC and residents of the village to regularly check and report on soil movements especially during the rainy season.

Main concern

A main concern is an elementary school with around 100 students located at a hill on top of the area where the large crack was reported to have been formed.

The MDCC has prepared an evacuation site near the village if the soil movement worsens, said Calumarde.

The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) in Western Visayas said 23.49 percent of areas in the region had been classified as "high landslide susceptibility."

The susceptibility of an area to a landslide is categorized through the sharpness of inclination (slope), existence of faults and water tributaries, and density of population.

Appeals mount for release of woman detainee

NAGA CITY—APPEALS FOR THE RELEASE ON humanitarian grounds of a woman detainee in Pagadian City have mounted here on the observance of International Women's Day on March 8.

Angelina Bisuña Ipong, 60, from Baao, Camarines Sur, is in danger of a heart attack while in continued detention, according to Leo Caballero of the Promotion of Church People Response.

Ipong has been charged with rebellion and several counts of murders. She was arrested on March 8, 2005 by military intelligence agents while she was conducting a seminar with farmers in Anastacia Mission Village in Barangay Lumbayao in Aloran, Misamis Occidental.

"I am old and have a few years left, but I don't want to spend a longer time in jail," Ipong told the INQUIRER.

Ipong is detained with 17 other women offenders at the Pagadian City Reformatory Center.

"The government should have pity on an elderly woman like me. I asked the military to drop the charges as I am innocent of their accusations," she added.

Lawyer Andres Nacilla, counsel for the rebellion charges, told the INQUIRER that he had filed a petition for bail for Ipong on the grounds that the pieces of evidence against her were not strong.

The charge of rebellion carries no bail. Nacilla said he hoped that the judge "under his discretion" will grant her request.

Ipong has been charged before the Regional Trial Court in Molave town, Zamboanga del Sur.

She is also facing two murder charges in Dipolog City and in Misamis Occidental.

The military has accused Ipong of being a high-ranking officer of the Communist Party of the Philippines in the Western Mindanao Region and was allegedly involved in several guerrilla attacks.

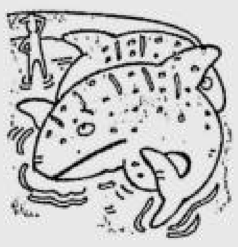
The Task Force Detainees of the Philippines-Mindanao, led by Ludie Montemor, and Jenna Belza, deputy secretary general of Karapatan-Western Mindanao, have separately appealed for the release of Ipong on humanitarian grounds.

In 1969, Ipong taught at the University of San Carlos and the Saint Theresa's College in Cebu City.

She joined the Mission Society of the Philippines where she worked as a community development worker in Tagum, Davao del Norte in the early 1970s. *Juan Escandor Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau, and Michael Sarcauga, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ROUNDUP

'Save the whale sharks'



DONSOL, Sorsogon—The mayor of this top tourist destination is appealing to the national government to help the municipality fight illegal fishing and save the whale sharks, the world's largest fish, in its waters. Mayor Salve Ocaya said the illegal fishers had been operating with impunity and appeared untouchable. They scare away the whale sharks and deprive them food, she said. She identified one of them as Omping Apuli, who operates large fishing boats. Ocaya made the appeal during the graduation of members of the newly organized tourist police force.

Bobby Labalan, Michael Jaucian and Niño Jesus Orbeta, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Panay road upgrading

ROXAS CITY—A portion of Central Panay's highway in Capiz is being upgraded as part of the government's efforts to promote tourism and improve the island's transport network. President Macapagal-Arroyo handed over the P20-million funding for the project to Gov. Vicente Bermejo when she visited this city in December last year. The President had said the improvement of the highway was crucial to the development of the tourist spots in Panay—a component of her administration's Strong Republic Nautical Highway project.

Felipe Celino, PDI Visayas Bureau

Negros health aid

VALENCIA, Negros Oriental—This geothermal-rich town has embarked on a health and mortuary program that ensures free hospitalization for residents and financial assistance to families of residents who have died. Under the town's Social Care Program, a family member is entitled to a P46,000 maximum hospitalization benefit within a year, while the family of a resident who dies will receive P10,000 in mortuary aid, Vice Mayor Deodoro L. Olasiman said. The municipal government has allocated P2.5 million for the project, which took effect this year, he said.

Romy Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau

RP, Thai customs data

CEBU CITY—The Philippines and Thailand have agreed to a memorandum of understanding to test the viability of a system allowing the exchange of import-export information between the two customs territories in Southeast Asia. Customs Commissioner Alexander Arevalo said that under the MOU, the two governments committed themselves to take initiatives to facilitate the exchange of data. Pilot-testing of the system began in December last year. If it succeeds, Indonesia will follow suit, Arevalo said.

Jolene Bulambot, PDI Visayas Bureau

Incestuous rape

BUTUAN CITY—Agents of the National Bureau of Investigation arrested a farmer here for allegedly turning his three daughters, aged 11, 17 and 20, into sex slaves for nearly three years since 2003. A brother of the victims was also arrested for allegedly raping one of them. Quoting the victims, Benjie Magtoto, NBI-Caraga special investigator, alleged that the farmer abused his children whenever the mother was out for work.

Franklin Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Families fear landslides

DAVAO CITY—At least 115 families fled their homes in Barangay Carmen in Baguio District here after heavy rains triggered landslides in the area last week. "We fear that a tragedy similar to the one in St. Bernard (Southern Leyte) will happen in our barangay," said barangay chair Alfred Austral. At least 10 landslides have occurred in the village, but nobody was reported hurt, Austral said. In late February, a portion of a hilly area of Carmen collapsed. Boulders and mud blocked the road and crashed on pipelines that supply water to four other villages.

Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Obstruction of justice

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) filed charges against three residents of the San Roque Silway in Dadiangas West village here for obstruction of justice. Supt. Adzhar Albani, PDEA regional chief, said the three warned suspected drug pushers of a buy-bust operation on Wednesday night. He said the suspects, identified as Clemente Castillo, Allan Lugpid and Raquel Bongado shouted that PDEA agents were coming. As a result, antidrug agents failed to arrest any suspects, according to Albani. "If they don't want to help us in our campaign against illegal drugs, they should not bungle our operation," Albani said.

Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

2 robbery suspects fall

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Two suspected members of a robbery gang were killed in a shootout with policemen shortly before midnight Saturday. City. Senior Supt. Alfredo Toroctocon, city police chief, identified the fatalities as Albert Coquilla, 21, of Purok Roberto, Labangal village; and Christopher Cabrera, 23, of Conel village on the city outskirts. Members of the Criminal Investigation Branch and the Bula police recovered a fragmentation grenade, a 12-guage shotgun, and a motorcycle allegedly used by the suspects from the crime scene.

Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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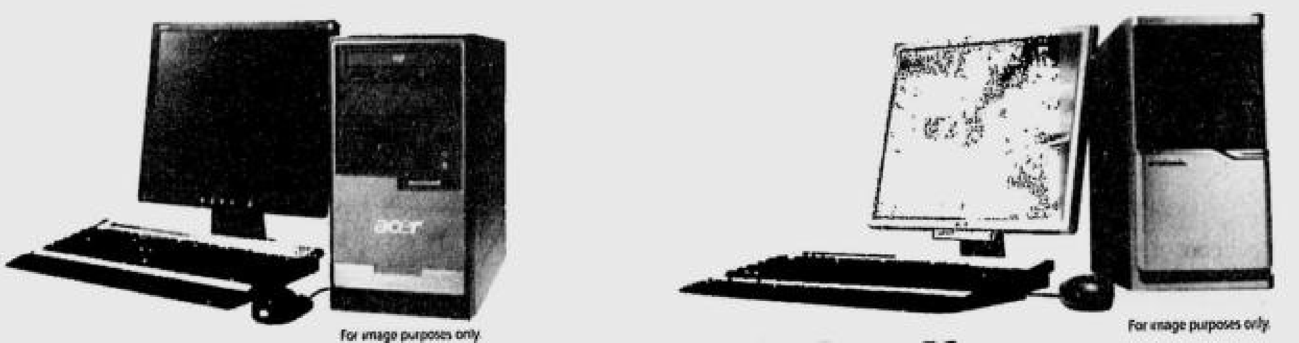

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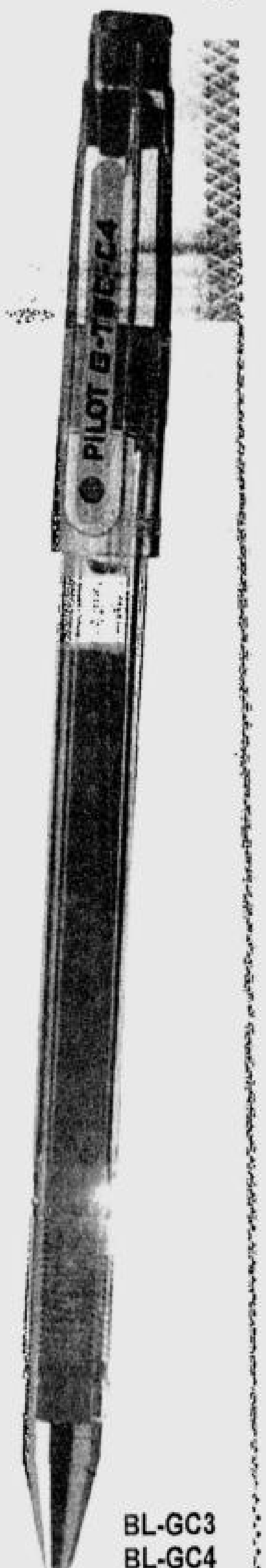

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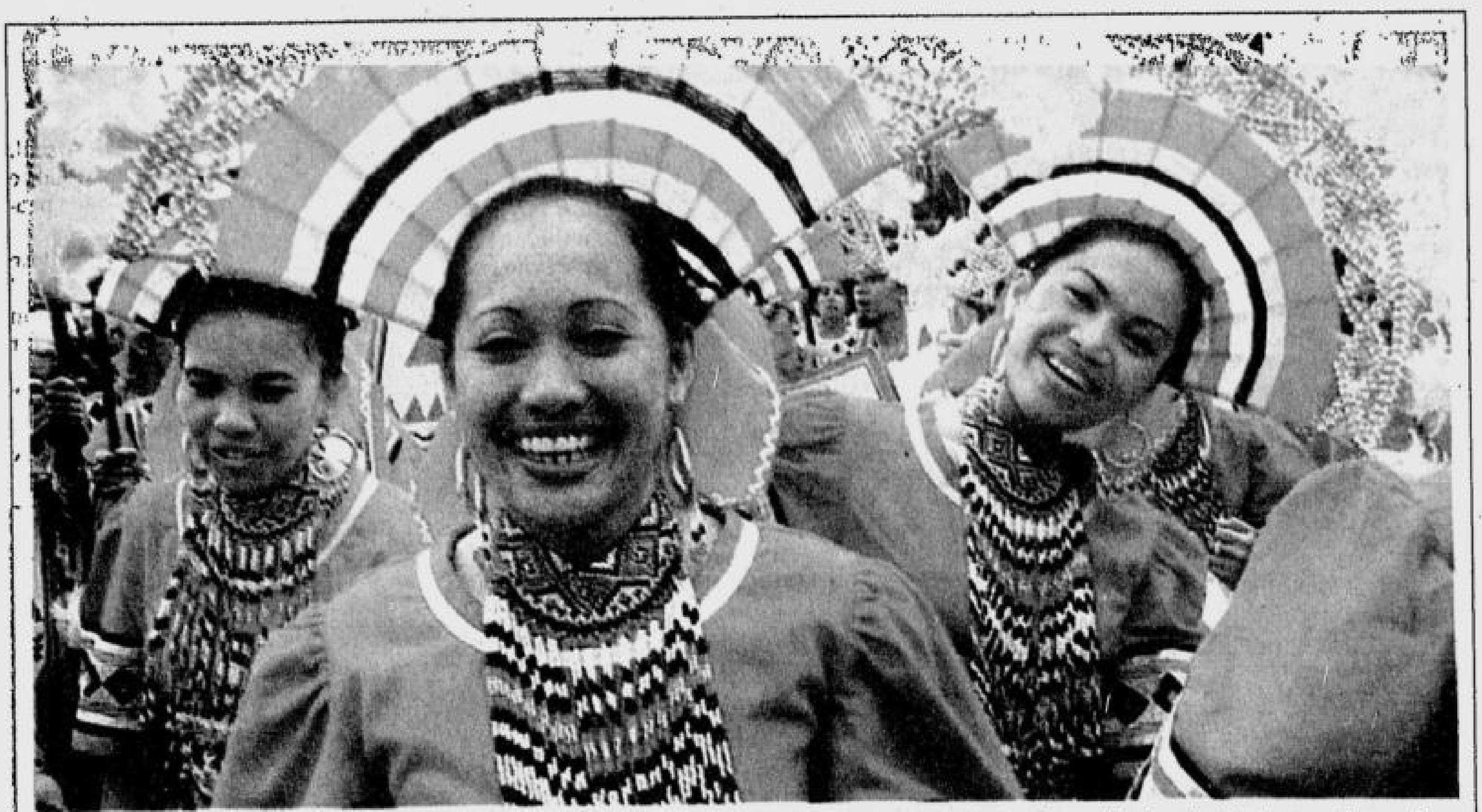


PARTICIPANTS of the Kaamulan street dancing belonging to the Bukidnon tribe of Malaybalay City smile despite the heat as they wait for the result of the competition.

GRACE CANTAL-ALBASIN/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

Mindanao, Palawan seen as BIMP-Eaga tourism hubs

DAVAO CITY—MINDANAO AND Palawan are being eyed as tourism hubs for the East Asean growth polygon that involves Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines (BIMP), according to Tourism Undersecretary Oscar Palabyab.

Member-countries of the growth area have been targeting their tourism promotion strategies at aggressively selling the subregion as a single tourist destination.

With at least 50 million people spread across 1.5 million sq km of land, Asia's largest subregional cooperation is making its presence felt as a premier culture, adventure and nature (CAN) destination.

The Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco) also reported that the Asian Development Bank was preparing a transportation project that would improve access to southern Philippines from other areas of the East Asean Growth Area (Eaga).

Medco said efforts were being undertaken to establish the Davao-Kota Kinabalu air route and to strengthen the Zamboanga-Sandakan sea linkage.

The tourism department has announced the resumption of flights from Zamboanga-Sandakan starting in the first quarter of the year.

Palabyab said it was timely for the cluster to come up with specific programs that would promote tourism, transportation, infrastructure, and information and communication technology.

Palabyab is also chair of the Philippine-EAGA Joint Tourism Development Cluster.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said that "with the renewed interest to revitalize BIMP-Eaga, it is imperative that the development approach to enhance its competitive advantage in the world market be galvanized." *Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Boracay tourism on upswing despite economic woes

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—TOURIST ARRIVALS in the island-resort of Boracay enjoy a continued upswing despite economic difficulties last year, records from the Department of Tourism showed.

The number of visitors last year reached 499,457, or 16.48 percent higher than the 428,755 recorded in 2004.

The tourists poured in P8.18 billion, or 38 percent higher than the P7.88 billion earned in 2004.

Domestic tourists comprised the bulk of the visitors, reaching 321,893 compared to 156,774 from other countries.

Overseas Filipino visitors numbered 21,820.

The increase in local tourists was attributed to the strengthening of the roll-on, roll-off (Roro) transport system under the government's Strong Republic Nautical Highway program, which cut travel expenses to Boracay.

Roro vessels are ferries, cargo ships or barges that carry wheeled cargo, such as cars, vans and buses. They often have built-in or land-based ramps that allow cargo to be "rolled on" and "rolled off" when in port.

Many of the foreign visitors were East Asians, who numbered 114,926. They were followed by Europeans (23,191) and North Americans (11,327).

Koreans remain the largest group of foreign visitors to the island with 100,922. They were followed by visitors from the United States (9,083), China (5,680) and Germany (5,503).

The surge in foreign tourist arrivals last year was attributed to the aggressive marketing programs of the DOT to attract visitors from neighboring Asian countries.

Tourism regional director Edwin Trompeta said the promotional campaign focused on Taiwan, Korea, China and Hong Kong. "These countries have a big market for our tourism industry and, at the same time, near our destinations," he said in a telephone interview.

He said 70 percent of the campaigns were focused on these countries last year.

To make the promotional materials attractive and effective, brochures and TV spots were created using the languages of these countries.

Trompeta said the tsunami that hit Asian countries in 2004 contributed to the increase in tourist arrivals in Boracay. Many popular tourist destinations in Indonesia and Thailand were hit by the calamity and were still undergoing reconstruction.

He said the country's political unrest failed to dampen the interest of foreign tourists.

Capiz board member wants 'mini-Boracay' island protected

By Felipe V. Celino
PDI Visayas Bureau

ROXAS CITY—A MEMBER OF THE PROVincial board pushed for the protection of Olotayan Island, described by its residents a mini-Boracay Island because of its crystal-clear waters and white sand beaches.

Board Member Rommel Roberto Lastimoso feared that the island might become another Semirara Island in Antique should the government not do anything to preserve and maintain its ecological balance.

Illegal fishing, illegal structures and other abuses on Olotayan's marine ecology would hurt chances that the island could realize its tourism potential, he said.

One of the 47 barangays in Roxas City, Olotayan is one hour by boat from Banica Wharf and is the only island barangay of the city. It has an estimated area of 100 hectares divided into four sitios—Sawang, Looc, Punta Sawang and Capaculan.

It has a total population of 903, composed of 157 households.

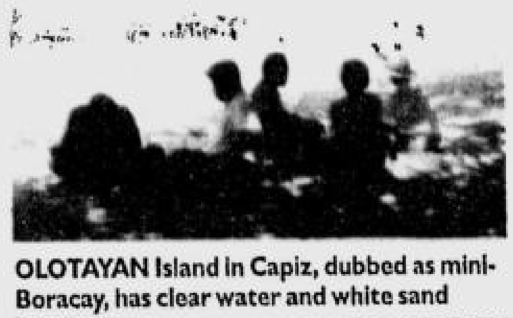
City Hall records show only five landowners in the island—Olotayan Development Realty Corp., lawyer William Villareal, and the Sicad, Aninang and Arinajo families.

Fishing is the major industry on the island. Squid, blue crabs and different varieties of fish as the major produce.

Lastimoso said he would push for the passage of a resolution requesting Tourism Secretary Ace Joseph Durano and Philippine Tourism Authority General Manager Dean Barbers to initially fund a study that will identify portions of the island that are potential international tourist attractions.

He reminded concerned local agencies, residents and the Bantay Dagat to keep a watchful eye on the island to maintain its pristine character.

The island has been identified as one of the tourist destinations in the city and province. It is ideal for water and other adventure sports.



OLOTAYAN Island in Capiz, dubbed as mini-Boracay, has clear water and white sand beaches.

FELIPE CELINO/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

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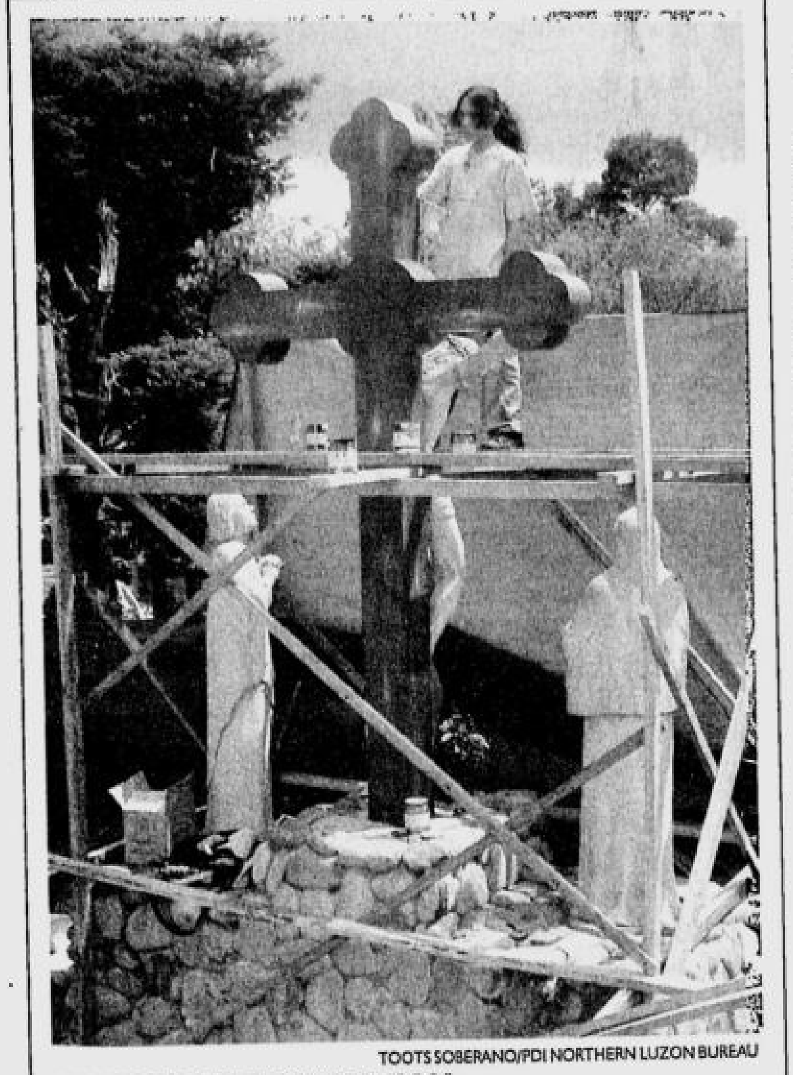
Anticoup drive goes on in North



TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

HOLY WEEK PREPARATION
The statue of the crucifixion at the Baguio Cathedral undergoes restoration work, in time for the holy week.

CAMP AQUINO, TARLAC CITY—THE MILITARY in Central and Northern Luzon has begun exposing those allegedly behind plots to overthrow the Arroyo administration in a bid to alienate and cut public support for perceived enemies of the state.

On March 8, the military's Northern Luzon Command bared what it called "declassified" information on the recent efforts to unseat President Macapagal-Arroyo.

In the activity dubbed "Stakeholders' Dialogue," Maj. Ferdinand Razalan, Nolcom intelligence chief, guided a group of 116 local officials, businessmen, bankers, students, teachers and church leaders, through the Power Point presentation "Destabilization Plot Uncovered."

Razalan, in his presentation, "exposed" what he called "incontrovertible proof" to seize the duly constituted government.

Citing documents seized from Magdalo leader First Lt. Lawrence San Juan and information gathered from recruits, Razalan began by giving the timeline of the attempt to overthrow the government—from the resurgence of the Magdalo mutineers in July 2003 until Feb. 23 when a faction in the military was supposed to withdraw support from the Arroyo administration.

The presentation also detailed the alleged connivance of rebel soldiers with the political opposition, some businessmen and the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, to oust Ms Arroyo.

Their "common ground," Razalan said, was the ouster of Ms Arroyo and the pursuit of "genuine societal change." What they agreed to establish, he said, was a "patriotic democratic government, not a junta."

But this, according to Lt. Gen. Romeo Tolentino, Nolcom chief, was a lie because it simply was a "power grab, propelled by personal interests."

In his speech, Tolentino called those involved in the failed coup as "soldiers who treaded the wrong path, soldiers who were paid."

"Our organization is being prostituted by retired military men who have joined politics. So don't vote for them," he said.

Military officers are "not trained in governance," he asserted.

"We're trained to manage violence," he said.

Tolentino said all these information would be brought down to the communities "so the people would know what is actually happening."

The campaign, he said, would also "expose the character of those involved in the design."

A compact disc of Razalan's presentation would be distributed to local governments for public viewing, Tolentino said.

"The situation is still volatile and fluid," Razalan said.

Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Iloilo Aglipayan priest fears for life

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—A MILITANT PRIEST of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) has raised fears for his life after masked men tried to force their way into the rectory of his parish church in Banate town, 54 km north of here.

Fr. Marco Sulayao, secretary general of the Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR) on Panay Island, said the attempted entry at dawn on March 9 happened a day after he spoke at a rally in Iloilo City, calling for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Sulayao, who is also the national governor of the IFI's National Priests Organization, said he was not at his parish when the incident happened.

But a helper, Alejandro Bandiola, told him that he was awakened at around 3 a.m. when a vehicle stopped near the church.

When he peeped at the rectory's window, he saw two bonnet-wearing men in denim pants and fatigue jackets trying to open the wooden door of the rectory.

Bandiola told Sulayao he saw two other similarly dressed men standing near a tree in front of the rectory.

When they failed to open the locked door, the men looked through a window of Sulayao's room but left a few minutes later after finding no one inside.

Sulayao said they reported the incident to the Banate police station after he knew of the incident.

He said "suspicious-looking" men had been seen posted near the church since he became active in campaigns on various issues a few years ago.

The human rights group Panay-Alliance-Karapatan and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) said the incident was the "latest act of state terrorism" against leaders of militant groups and organizations.

The party-list group Bayan Muna said more than 80 of its leaders and members have been killed nationwide since 2001. Bayan and Bayan Muna have blamed the police and the military for the killings, a claim that has been repeatedly denied by military and police officials.

"This shows that the crackdown and murderous campaign against those most vocal against the Arroyo administration continues despite the lifting of Proclamation 1017," said Samuel Torrato, Panay Alliance-Karapatan secretary general, referring to the weeklong declaration of a state of national emergency issued by the President.

Labor groups seek ₱95 wage hike

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—FIVE LABOR ORGANIZAtions under the Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) in Cebu have asked the regional wage board to grant a P95 across-the-board wage increase, citing skyrocketing prices of basic commodities due to oil price increases and the implementation of the 12 percent expanded value-added tax (E-vat).

The Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board (RTWPB) Central Visayas, in a meeting Wednesday, asked the APL to appear before it on March 23 to justify the petition, according to Marianito Ventura, one of two labor representatives in the board.

Justification

Ventura said the board wanted to hear the APL's justification on why it should call for a public hearing at this time. The board issued Wage Order No. 11 in June 2005 or less than a year ago, granting a P23 increase of the minimum wage for Central Visayas.

The existing daily minimum wage received by the workers in Cebu is P223, P200 for Bohol and Oriental Negros, and P190 for Siquijor and the islands of Camotes and Bantayan in Cebu province.

Under the Labor Code, the wage board is prevented from discussing any petition for wage increase within one year from the last issuance of a wage order, unless a "supervening event" would warrant the review of the wage structure, Ventura said.

The technical working group of the wage board, composed of different government agencies, will also assess the economic situation in Central Visayas to determine if the petition for a new wage increase is warranted.

The five organizations that filed the petition for wage increase were the Shemberg Employees Independent Union, Employees Association of Robinsons' Supermarket, Nagkahiusang Mamumuo sa LBF Hardware, Kan-irag Employees Labor Organization and the Public Interest Advocacy and Litigation Office.

Skyrocketing prices •

The petitioners said that since the P23 wage increase took effect, "prices of basic commodities skyrocketed after the constant devaluation, the non-stop oil price hike, and the implementation of the E-vat."

They also said inflation rate in Central Visayas reached 6.5 percent at the end of 2005, which further eroded the purchasing capacities of wage-earners.

With the value of P1 pegged at P0.52 in 2005, the petitioners said the nominal wage rate of P223 actually only had a real value of P62.41.

The petitioners said they were willing to substantiate the grounds for their demand before the wage board hearing.

Comelec denies motion to unseat mayor

LEGAZPI CITY—THE COMMISSION ON ELECtions Second Division denied for lack of merit a motion for the issuance of a writ of execution of its order to unseat incumbent Mayor Noel Rosal filed by a mayoral candidate.

The Comelec Second Division came out with a decision in January declaring Imperial, who asked for a recount, as winner by about 2,000 votes during the May 2004 elections.

The Legazpi City Board of Canvassers had declared Rosal winner in the May 2004 elections with 44,277 votes against Imperial's 33,275.

As a result of the Comelec's January decision in favor of Imperial, the latter filed a motion for the execution of the Comelec decision while Rosal appealed the ruling.

In its March 3 order penned by Presiding Commissioner Florentino Tuason Jr. and Commissioner Romeo Brawner, the Comelec said Imperial had failed to show there were peculiar circumstances in the case to warrant the urgency of the issuance of a writ of execution.

The Comelec added that there were differences in the computations made by the division members as to the margin of votes obtained by the opposing parties.

While then presiding commissioner Mehol Sidain declared a margin of 2,106 votes, Tuason claimed a significant decrease of 65 votes margin.

Tuason and Brawner believed that "to issue a writ of execution at this stage will do more harm or damage rather than serve the interest of the electorate of Legazpi City."

Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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Residual threats remain, says GMA

From page A1

"We are fully aware that some groups have not ceased in their attempts to undermine our democratic way of life," Ms Arroyo said. "I am ordering the police and the military to expose all residual and anticipated threats of destabilization even as we push the normalization process."

On Feb. 24, Ms Arroyo proclaimed a weeklong state of national emergency, saying an alliance of communist guerrillas, rebel soldiers, politicians and businessmen was planning to oust her. Although the proclamation has been rescinded, critics said its effects continued to be felt.

She said yesterday that the military and police remained loyal to her. "We have the watchful eye, the will and the resources to counter their moves," the 58-year-old President said.

Rule of law in streets

Ms Arroyo vowed to continue to "sternly enforce the rule of law in the streets while protecting human rights and informing the people of threats to their peace, welfare and well-being."

She called for continued vigilance, saying this would enable her administration to focus on improving the economy, to generate investments and jobs that would "break the cycle of poverty."

Spokespersons said the AFP leadership was irked by the INQUIRER article on Saturday which stated that the military's senior officers, except for Army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, had planned to withdraw support from Ms Arroyo to pave the way for the establishment of a caretaker government under Senga.

Senga himself has denied the report.

Asked if the AFP believed that the publishing of similar news items was part of the plot to remove Ms Arroyo, Colonel Kison said, "Yes. That's part (of it)."

"This is a possibility," Kison later modified his earlier statement. But he again said yes when pressed if that was how the AFP felt about the INQUIRER article.

AFP remains solid

"The truth is that the AFP is solid. If it is not, it would have fallen apart already," Kison told the INQUIRER on the phone.

"What we feel is that ... only the AFP has remained standing. (Now) they are trying to bring down the AFP, to break its unity. They have started with the major service commanders," he said.

The target this time is the military's officers and enlisted men. Those seeking to bring down Ms Arroyo want to create the impression that this or that general had indeed intended to join a coup against Ms Arroyo, according to Kison.

He said that at one point it was reported that Senga and Esperon had a "rift" and at another point, that Senga was going to put Senate President Franklin Drilon in power.

"These have no basis. These are unnamed sources. These cannot be," Kison said.

He said the military saw in such articles "unseen hands and puppet masters."

A statement faxed to the INQUIRER yesterday said "the AFP decried an article that appeared in a major broadsheet that once again portrayed a different story compared to those that actually and truthfully transpired within the AFP in the days prior to the declaration of a state of national emergency."

PRESIDENT ARROYO

Cloak of anonymity

"Conveniently hiding its sources under the 'cloak of anonymity' and citing self-serving 'obvious reasons,' this daily may have knowingly or unknowingly been assisting those working to prevent unity in the AFP and further divide it to suit selfish ends and vested interests," it said.

Kison confirmed on the phone that the AFP statement was referring to the INQUIRER article.

"Capt. Geronimo Malabanan, the Navy public information chief, has warned that 'puppet masters' masquerading as 'credible sources' from within and out of the AFP are lurking around on the look-out and ready to seize opportunities to sow intrigue, foment dissent and create a general atmosphere of distrust within the ranks," the statement said.

"And in the particular article ... they are now trying to divide the AFP leadership and discrediting the major service commanders.

Esperon faithful

"This is a far cry from the truth since (Senga) and the major service commanders are very much in touch, working well with each other and not the least bit thinking of anything unconstitutional," it added.

The military was also irked at what it described as the "insinuation" that Esperon's firm stand against the coup plot stemmed from his alleged involvement in the "Hello Garci" scandal. This referred to wiretapped telephone conversations purportedly between Ms Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

The opposition said the recordings were evidence Ms Arroyo stole the 2004 presidential election—a charge the President has denied.

"(Esperon) was afraid that when a new government is in place, he would be investigated for his role in the 'Hello Garci' scandal," the INQUIRER article said.

Esperon was one of several senior officers from the AFP and the Philippine National Police whose names had cropped up in the Garcillano tapes.

Grand design

The statement said Esperon's action to quell the plot had nothing to do with the wiretaps or election fraud but with his "firm commitment to his constitutional duty and in compliance" with Senga's orders.

Quoting Maj. Bartolome Bacarro, chief of the Army's public affairs office, the statement added:

"These may be part of a grand design to destroy the Armed Forces of the Philippines, which has remained steadfast in defending the Constitution and the state. It is not by chance that these persistent efforts to sow intrigue and demoralize the AFP organization and its leadership coincide with the efforts to oust the President and Commander in Chief.

"The command has and will remain professional, dedicated and focused as ever. No amount of intrigue, rumor-mongering or false stories going around will derail the program of the current leadership in the (PAF) Philippine Air Force.

"To this end, all the other major services have given their assurance that their respective commanders are vigilant, able and ready to quell any moves by destabilizers who are out to destroy the prevailing peace and stall the ongoing development of the nation," said the statement, quoting PAF spokesperson Lt. Col. Restituto Padilla.

Riding AFP tail, ending up in its jaws

From page A1

only gave a new dimension to the plot, contradicting denials of military officers involved in it and the administration's version, but also gave the public a picture of the changing scenarios of coup-making since the military breakaway with the Marcos dictatorship in February 1986.

I am not introducing new facts to the story, but the facts reported by Bergonia and Zamora allow us to identify the changes that have taken place in coup-making scenarios.

Since 1986, no fewer than six attempted coups have been mounted, each with different configurations of civilian or military involvement. In all these attempts, the military has been a key element of their success or failure.

The failed Feb. 24 coup plot had a military component, as did each of the plots since 1986, including People Power I and II.

All have been extralegal and extraconstitutional actions to change elected leaders (Ferdinand Marcos, Joseph Estrada and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo were all elected).

Whatever you name it, a coup is a coup and it cuts corners on the Constitution, whether it is bloodless or violent.

Military takeover

The implication of this common element—the extraconstitutional methods used—is that on Feb. 24, the INQUIRER series suggests, we came closer to a military takeover than we had ever been since 1986.

In 1986 and 2001, the military refrained from straight power grab and yielded power to civilians who represented the people power in the streets. If the Feb. 24 plot had succeeded, we could have seen a takeover by a military-backed junta, with only a token membership of civilians as mere figureheads to give it an acceptable face.

What the military involvement in the coup plots from 1986 warns us is that civil institutions have increasingly been weakened for them to mediate political crises and stalemates, and that we can no longer be confident that the military will relinquish power to civilians each time a regime is toppled.

An increasing pattern

Investigations of all the coup plots have increasingly revealed the pattern that the soldiers are less inclined to yield power to the civilians and that their idea of civil society participation is that people power is something they can use as cannon fodder to form a critical mass that will give them an excuse to "withdraw support" from a regime rocked by a crisis of legitimacy and corruption scandals.

The Feb. 24 plot, among all the plots before it, according to the facts covered by the INQUIRER series, had planned for a junta scenario.

Planning had already reached the advanced stage of naming the components of a "transition council," which was to seize the leadership of the executive and judicial branches of government immediately after Ms Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro had been toppled.

What's in a name?

The plan called for the installation of a "transition council" (a euphemism for junta) or a caretaker government to be headed by AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga.

Although Senga has denied involvement in the plot, the INQUIRER report said coup plotters had briefed and consulted him about it.

Other reports said Senga leaked the plan to the President, indicating he had knowledge of the conspiracy, prompting the President to declare the state of national emergency.

The plan, as outlined by the PDI reports, called for:

- After Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, commander of the elite First Scout Ranger Regiment, had announced withdrawal of his support for the Arroyo administration at a rally of civil society opponents of the regime in Makati on Feb. 24, major service commanders would follow suit and Senga would read a message at the rally also withdrawing support.

The Lim withdrawal didn't happen. Senga, who appeared reluctant to join the plot, put Lim under arrest. The plot came unstuck after the leak.

- A snap election would be called following the ouster of the President and the Vice President. It is not clear how long after will the snap election be held.

Front men

- In the meantime, a transition council would act as a caretaker government, with Senga as head, "if he agreed." The report named the following as having been considered for membership of the council: former Executive Secretary Renato de Villa, former Executive Secretary Oscar Orbos (of the Aquino Cabinet), Sen. Panfilo Lacson, former Sen. Gregorio Hosanan, former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, and defeated presidential candidate Bro. Eddie Villanueva.

In the history of coups in Third World countries, civilians have been thrown into the junta as front men to give the juntas international legitimacy, but civilians were soon pushed to the sidelines.

Illusions of power

The civilians—all known opponents of Ms Arroyo and demanding her resignation—should have no illusions about having real power in a junta. They are likely to follow the fate of discarded civilian junta members after they had been used.

Coup plotters have called their plot "withdrawal of support," a reprise of the defection of AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Angelo Reyes, which precipitated the collapse of the Estrada administration.

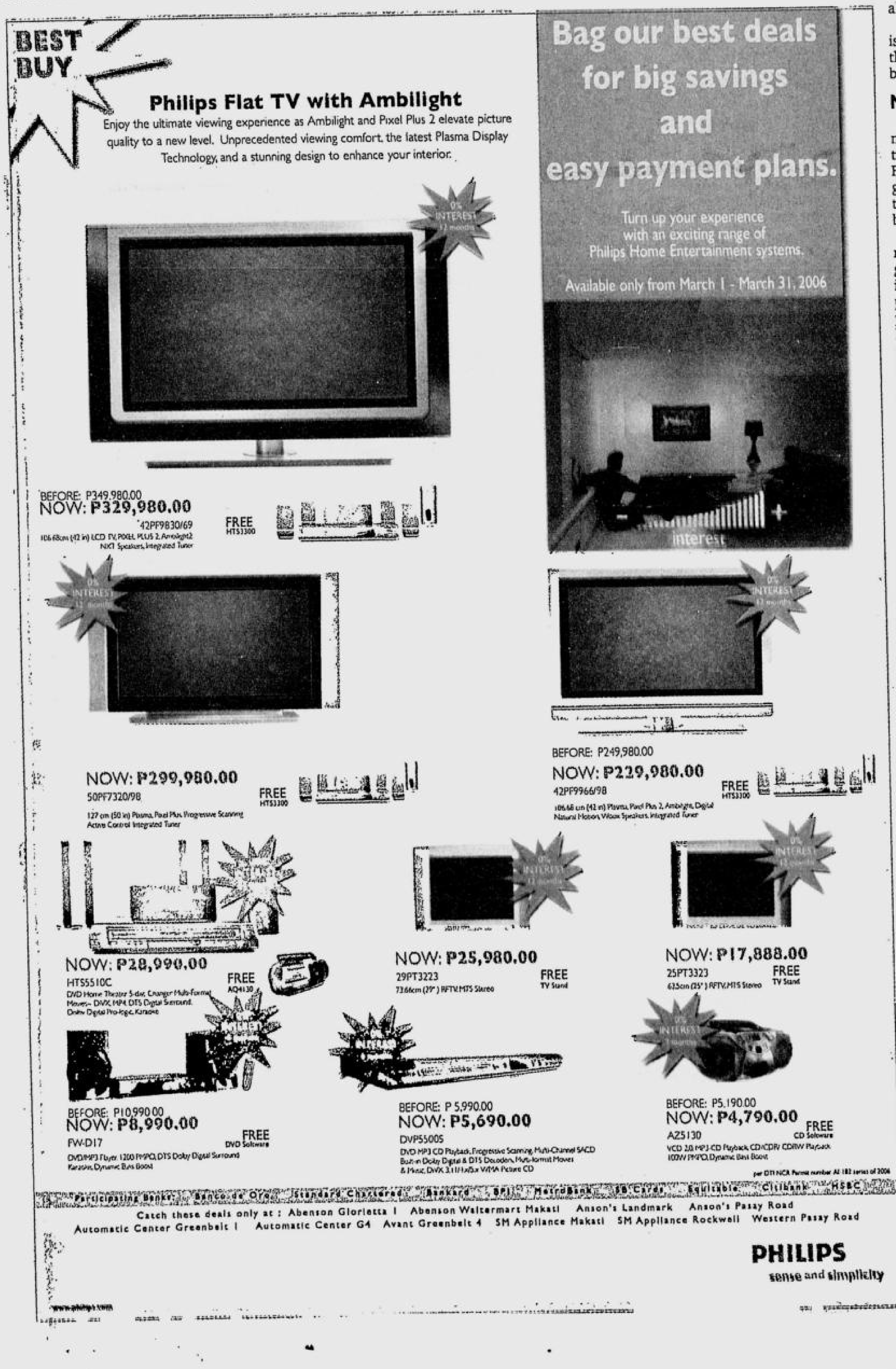
Let us not be fooled by this euphemism. The plot centered on General Lim's withdrawal envisaged a more ambitious and less benign military intervention than in 1986 and 2001.

From tail to jaws

In the Feb. 26 Marines impasse at Fort Bonifacio, civil society groups proved how impotent they were to mobilize mass support. They were marginalized. The rebellious Marines wanted to use them.

The plot of Feb. 24 was more about guns and the qualitative change of objective from transferring power to civilians, to straight military takeover. It was a more dangerous power game.

Civil society groups sought to ride the tail of the military tiger in their obsession to bring down Ms Arroyo. They would end up in the jaws of the tiger.



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Now it can be told: Esperon was the 'key'

From page A1

while ranged on opposite sides, had a "gentleman's agreement" that they would try to avoid bloodshed in order not to divide the Armed Forces.

Accounts about the configuration of military forces opposed to and supporting Ms Arroyo came from interviews with officers of various ranks. The officers did not want to be identified, citing a military directive restricting them from talking to the media.

Go-for-broke guy

Former Ambassador Roy Señeres, who helped the opposition link up with the military, conceded that Esperon's role was crucial.

"Esperon was 'go-for-broke' while Senga was vacillating," Señeres said.

Accounts by military insiders said that on the afternoon of Feb. 23, Lim and Querubin went to the office of Brig. Gen. Rodrigo Maclang, AFP deputy chief of staff for intelligence, for "a social call" and to answer questions about their links to rumored coup plots.

Maclang was told about the plans of junior and mid-level officers to join a people's march scheduled for the next day. Lim and Querubin also told Maclang they intended to join the activity.

Meeting of the generals

From Maclang's office, Lim and Querubin went to Senga and told him that they could not stop the young and mid-level officers from joining the march.

Senga did not oppose the plan, one source said.

After Lim and Querubin left, Senga called Esperon, Air Force chief Lt. Gen. Jose Reyes, Navy chief Vice Admiral Mateo Mayuga and Marine commandant Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda for a conference.

ESPERON

Lim, Querubin and even Franco were asked to attend the conference at GHQ.

Follow the leader

Senga disclosed the plan of the young officers as told to him by Lim. Senga then asked the generals for their positions, according to one account.

Reyes, Mayuga and Esperon said they would "follow the decision of the chief of staff," the source said.

But Esperon also asked Lim to "make sure the critical mass is there before the military joins the people at Edsa," or he would oppose them, the source added.

Malacañang alerted

Lim, Esperon and all the generals present agreed to avoid bloodshed or any move that would "split the AFP," said the source.

Esperon also informed Malacañang about the planned breakaway, and alerted Tolentino and Palparan to "stop" any movement of troops coming from camps in Luzon to Manila.

Col. Art Ortiz, chief of the Socom and the Special Forces Regiment, was also ordered to account for his troops and make sure his unit was intact.

Chain of command

Esperon also ordered the Army in Fort Bonifacio to barricade the Marine headquarters and prevent the Marines from leaving.

It was checkmate for Lim and Querubin, who found themselves immobilized by Esperon's actions.

Esperon has denied involvement in any plot and said the chain of command was solidly behind Ms Arroyo.

Mayuga told the INQUIRER it was not only Esperon but all the other service commanders who opposed the "withdrawal" plan, and stressed that the military leadership had always been behind the chain of command with Ms Arroyo as their Commander in Chief.

A "constitutionally grounded" officer, Reyes, for his part, "will never do anything" to violate the chain of command, the Air Force said.

All over

By the early morning of Feb. 24, Senga advised Lim to place himself under AFP custody and to remain in Maclang's office while awaiting instructions.

A few hours later, Ms Arroyo announced that her forces had thwarted a coup plot. She also declared a state of national emergency.

2 bishops back sacked Army general

From page A1

The 50-year-old Lim found an instant fan in Labayen, who had a lengthy conversation with the general before celebrating Mass at around 11:30 a.m.

Conscience

"I sensed that it's not so much about his career. What's more important to him was his conscience, especially his patriotism," Labayen, bishop emeritus of Infanta (Quezon), told the INQUIRER.

"If I think only about myself, then I don't have to think about anything else because I can go up (the career ladder) and have a secure life. But the thing is, it's not only about me—it's about achieving genuine peace in our motherland," Labayen quoted Lim as telling him.

"So, how can we not believe a person like him?" Labayen said. "This is not anymore just about his personal security. It is his conscience that is telling him, in the light of the Good News, that we have to work for the nation and for peace in the world."

Labayen said his talk with Lim dashed his image of the military, shaped during the martial law rule of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, as the "enemy of the people."

Third dimension

"I realized that we have so many good officers out there," added Labayen, who said he was called "a communist, a Marxist," during the Marcos regime. "Like today, the mentality is 'If you're not with us, you're against us.' They forget that there's a third dimension, that there is God."

Lim, a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, began his military career as a platoon leader of the All-Igorot Forward Reconnaissance Unit based in Jolo, battling Moro insurgents in the late 1970s.

He shot to national prominence ironically in the occupation by rebel soldiers of Makati City's commercial district during the Dec. 1-7, 1989 coup attempt against then President Corazon Aquino.

Lim led the defeated soldiers back to barracks in the wake of the bloodiest military uprising against Aquino.

Still, Lim's stock grew. He received his star rank in April 2005, becoming one of the youngest officers to make general.

'Destabilizers'

Armed Forces officials claimed Lim had planned to lead disgruntled military elements in withdrawing support from Ms Arroyo and marching to Edsa on Feb. 24 in a failed bid to replicate the "people power" revolutions. The march was to coincide with the 20th anniversary of Edsa I.

Politicians, priests, business leaders and bishops were allegedly involved in the plot.

Lim denied he had attempted to overthrow Ms Arroyo. "No, I'm not aware of any coup," he told the INQUIRER. He declined to elaborate.

Labayen said he didn't mind if Ms Arroyo's allies read malice in the bishops' visit and tag the prelates as "destabilizers," like Lim.

The prelate said he was aware that the administration had accused even members of the Catholic hierarchy of involvement in the alleged coup plot.

Church teaching

In his homily, Labayen said the Church's teaching on achieving peace through truth and justice was especially relevant amid the political crisis triggered by Ms Arroyo's alleged cheating in 2004.

"Today, there is confusion because the President is concealing the truth, putting it aside, trampling on it," he said. "The people don't want anything but the truth."

Labayen was accompanied by Franciscan Sr. Agneta Lauzon and Jose Albert, Hero Vaswani and lawyer Fred Bentulan of the Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya, a self-proclaimed nationalist movement.

Wearing a white shirt and black slacks, Lim appeared calm and composed during his conversation with Labayen and throughout the Mass. Later at lunch, Lim was more at ease, visibly entertained by his guests' jokes.

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* See flyers for more details.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-113 and A2-114 Series of 2006

6 customs employees axed over Lee case

By Leila B. Salaverria

A DIVISION CHIEF AND A CUSTOMS APpraiser, two examiners and two guards at the Bureau of Customs have been relieved while their roles in the release of a shipment purportedly belonging to suspected smuggler Samuel Lee is being investigated.

Customs legal officer Reynaldo Umali identified the six as Leo Peralta, chief of the BOC public/private warehouse division; Froilana Umpangco, principal appraiser of the warehousing assessment division (WAD); Nicia Ong, WAD principal examiner; Paul Soriano, WAD examiner, and Rolando Marcelo and Noli Silvestre, customs guards.

Umali said the six could be held liable for the release of a shipment of plastic resin that was misdeclared as packaging materials.

The shipment, in three container vans, was seized by police on its way to a company in Valenzuela City when it was supposed to be delivered to a customs bonded warehouse.

Police arrested Lee on his arrival from Hong Kong after he was tagged as the person who had ordered the container vans diverted. He is facing charges of violating the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines and is out on bail.

Due process

Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales said in an earlier interview the six bureau employees would be given due process and he ordered their relief to allow for a proper investigation.

The employees, who signed and processed the papers that led to the release of Lee's shipment, have been given 72 hours to explain why they should not be sanctioned after their relief orders were issued last Wednesday.

If probable cause were to be found, the employees would be slapped with administrative, and possibly criminal, charges, Morales said.

BIR's own probe

Meanwhile, undaunted by the dismissal of cases they had brought for prosecution before the Department of Justice, Bureau of Internal Revenue officials said they were pursuing the investigation of companies suspected of smuggling so they could be pinned down for tax evasion.

"If we see that there is an element of tax evasion in the cases against smugglers, then we will pursue that," said Estela Valdez-Sales, acting assistant commissioner for inspection service and one of the officials running the BIR's Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) program.

Sales said the bureau was coordinating with the Bureau of Customs, which has its own Run After the Smugglers (Rats) program, in the campaign against big-time smugglers.

Sales' statements came on the heels of the controversy caused by a Quezon City prosecutor's release of Lee on bail.

Lee, whose name came up in a Senate hearing as one of a number of suspected smugglers purportedly close to First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, had been in the sights of several law enforcement agencies for his alleged smuggling activities using dummy corporations. *With Armand N. Nocum*

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TOMORROW:
A peep into
the business of money-
lending invaders

Come out, hazing witnesses dared

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE FAMILY OF SLAIN TECHNOlogical University of the Philippines (TUP) student Clark Anson Silverio has dared eyewitnesses to come forward and shed light on the crime in time for the burial of the victim in his hometown today.

The Makati Police Department's (MPD) Homicide Section had filed charges of violation of the antihazing law against five TUP-Manila students implicated in the initiation rites, the alleged owners of the warehouse where the rites were held, and several other unidentified suspects.

"Somehow, our pain was alleviated because they were already charged. But what we want to happen is for others who were with my brother [during the hazing rites] to come out and tell the police what they know so we could get justice," Renelyn Silverio, elder sister of the slain fratman, told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

As the eldest of the Silverio brood of five, 22-year-old Renelyn, a nurse, was tasked to follow the progress of her brother's case in court. She had said the family was ready to go the distance to get her brother due justice, no matter the costs.

"We are doing okay, but we are still grieving. All that we want now is for those responsible to be brought to justice," she explained.

Silverio, 18, was killed in what police believed were hazing rites by the TUP chapter of the Tau Gamma Phi fraternity conducted in a warehouse on Guatemala Street, Barangay San Isidro, Makati City.

Silverio, a mechanical engineering student, sustained severe contusions and was declared dead upon arrival at the Manila Sanitarium Hospital around 5:45 p.m. on March 3.

He will be interred this afternoon at a public cemetery in San Jose town, Occidental Mindoro, the Silverio family's hometown, after a requiem Mass at the Seventh Day Adventist Church there.

A suspect, Edmar Gipan, 18, has been charged and is now detained at the Makati City Jail. However, other suspects have remained at large.

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Pateros, Navotas roads safest /A26

■ Thousands join race to save dying Pasig River /A26

■ QC trash collectors could be into drugs /A26

Eusebio to contest Napolcom decision

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE PASIG CITY GOVERNMENT WILL CONtest the decision of the National Police Commission to strip Mayor Vicente Eusebio of his police powers.

"We are planning to write a letter to the Napolcom," Pasig City Legal Officer Carlos Abesamis told the INQUIRER.

Abesamis maintained that Eusebio did not abuse his authority when he ordered the demolition of a compound of drug dens in Barangay Sto. Tomas on Feb. 15, five days after the national police raided the area, contrary to the Napolcom's stand which led to its decision to withdraw the mayor's supervisory powers over the local police.

"The mayor consulted with some judges, some prosecutors and several legal teams before he decided to demolish the compound. There was also a City Council resolution for the raid, aside from the recommendations from the city health department and the social welfare department," Abesamis said.

Social stigma

He added that residents in the affected neighborhood also asked Eusebio to demolish the shanties to erase the stigma already attached to the community because of the shocking discovery.

National police operatives discovered more than 40 shanties serving as drug dens in a raid in Sitio Mapayapa in Barangay Sto. Tomas on Feb. 10. The discovery later resulted in the relief of over 20 policemen, including Eastern Police District director Chief Supt. Oscar Valenzuela and Pasig City Police chief Senior Supt. Raul Medina.

Abesamis said Eusebio even invited the Commission on Human Rights as well as the owner of the property to personally witness the demolition.

The PNP Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force (AIDSOTF) had said Eusebio did not coordinate with them before demolishing the shanties, which should have formed part of the evidence against those arrested.

But Abesamis said they coordinated with the local police who should have relayed the information to their higher officers.

Not interested

Eusebio had earlier told the INQUIRER he was not interested in any police power. He said the Napolcom decision would give him more time to concentrate on his other duties.

But he added he would still support the local police.

PNP AIDSOTF head Chief Supt. Marcelo Ele Jr. said yesterday they were monitoring at least four more barangays in Pasig City after the Feb. 10 raid and an operation which led to the discovery of four houses serving as shabu stockrooms in Barangay Pineda on Friday afternoon.

"We have decided to redirect our operations to the street level," Ele told the INQUIRER.

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Quezon City gov't sees the light

By DJ Yap

THE QUEZON CITY GOVERNMENT has taken a small but significant step toward saving electricity costs and helping save the environment.

Last Tuesday, the city became one of the first to join the "Palit-Ilaw Program" of the Department of Energy and the Philippine Efficient Lighting Market Transformation Project (PELMATP).

The program seeks to encourage the use of energy-efficient and environment-friendly lighting systems among Filipinos.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. spearheaded the launching of the program in the city, by changing the incandescent bulbs at the Quezon City Bulwagan to fluorescent lamps.

Over P4,000 in savings

Consider this: Replacing a 100-watt incandescent bulb with a 20 to 25-watt compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) means savings of P4,214 over 6,000 hours of use.

The incandescent bulb may cost only P21, but it will have to be replaced five times before a CFL (which costs P150) needs changing.

Using a CFL also translates to a reduction of 285 kilos of carbon dioxide emission, which is believed to cause the "greenhouse effect" as well as global warming.

But despite the benefits of CFLs, more than half or 52 percent of Filipino households still use incandescent bulbs, according to Noel Verdote, project manager of PELMATP.

"Palit-Ilaw" seeks to promote the shift in the use of incandescent bulbs to CFLs, and 40-watt linear fluorescent lamps (T12) to 36-watt LFLs (T8). Compared to T12s, T8s, are about 10 percent more energy-efficient.

At the City Hall, 48 pieces of T8s were installed to replace T12s during the ceremonial switching of lights.

More areas targeted

Other towns and cities in Metro Manila, Cebu, Davao and Baguio are expected to follow suit, Verdote said.

The DOE and PELMATP are employing three strategies to provide the "enabling environment" for the use of CFLs: Structural, technological and behavioral, he added.

Of the three, changing people's behavior may prove to be the toughest, Verdote said.

He said Filipinos still buy incandescent bulbs because it has become a habit and because it is cheaper "in the short term." However, few realize that CFLs actually cost much less because they consume less energy and last longer, Verdote said.

The "Palit-Ilaw Program" targets heavy users of incandescent bulbs and T12s, particularly homes and classrooms.

Five-year program

PELMATP is a five-year project of the DOE and the United Nations Development Program that began last year. It is funded by the Global Environment Fund and aims to promote energy efficient lighting systems and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The program also aims for total energy savings of six percent and 11 percent by 2006 and 2010, respectively.

Pateros, Navotas roads safest in Metro Manila

By Tarra V. Quismundo

PATEROS AND NAVOTAS HAD THE LEAST number of road accidents last year, making the two towns the safest for both motorists and pedestrians, according to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

Based on the Metro Manila Accident Reporting and Analysis System (MMARAS) report of the MMDA Road Safety Unit (RSU), the two towns had the lowest accident rate among the 17 cities and towns in the metropolis.

The RSU, however, attributed this to the size of the two towns, saying that Pateros which has a land area of 10.4 sq km and Navotas which covers 2.6 sq km, were smaller compared to other major cities. In addition, both had "no major arterial road" or major thoroughfare.

Size matters

"You should consider the size. Those towns are among the smallest in Metro Manila, and that's proportionate to the length of roads with respect to others like Quezon City. The towns have less people and smaller land area," said MMDA Traffic Engineering Center chief Ramon Ona.

The RSU added that since the two towns were not considered financial districts, they did not attract that much traffic volume and had "manageable traffic direction and control."

Congestion, flooding other factors

"There are many factors. There is less activity on the roads there in terms of vehicles and pedestrians, and the vehicles can't really run that fast because the areas are congested. In terms of configuration of roads, you'd see that in the case of Navotas, there would be flooding and so vehicles could not run that fast," said Ona.

Speed, he said, has long been among the leading causes of accidents.

According to the MMARAS report, a total of 65,086 road accidents occurred last year in the metropolis. The majority of the accidents or 82 percent, resulted in injuries or damage to property.

Pateros had the lowest number of accidents at 167. Of the total, only one accident resulted in a fatality, 55 others led to injuries while 111 caused damage to property.

Navotas, on the other, had 337 accidents, three of which resulted in deaths. Seventy-three others caused injuries, while 261 caused damage to property.

QC still tops

On the other hand, Quezon City, which has the biggest land area (166.2 sq km) among the 17 cities and towns, had the most number of road accidents last year.

The city has many major thoroughfares, including Commonwealth Avenue—which has been dubbed the "killer highway" because it registered the most number of road accidents among Metro thoroughfares last year—Quezon Avenue, Edsa and Katipunan Avenue.

It registered a total of 21,003 accidents or 32.3 percent of the total accidents in the metropolis. Of the figure, 109 resulted in deaths and 3,525 others led to injuries.

Next was Makati with 7,699 accidents and Manila with 4,598 accidents.

The MMDA noted, however, that although Manila had fewer accidents than Makati, it resulted in more deaths, a total of 50, compared to Makati's 12.

Thousands join race to save dying Pasig River

By Jocelyn P. Dimaculangan

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS ON FEB. 27 were full of stories about the Marines standoff that had taken place in Fort Bonifacio the day before.

Little was said about an event that had occurred near the Marine headquarters several hours before—a race to save the Pasig River.

Over 7,000 runners participated in this year's 2nd International Marathon for the Pasig River, not only in hopes of snagging the P954,705 worth of cash and prizes at stake but to raise funds for the rehabilitation of the waterway.

They came from all over the country—from Metro Manila, Baguio City, Cebu, Iloilo, Bohol and Davao. One runner even came from as far away as Kenya.

The event was sponsored by the Clean and Green Foundation, Inc., the advocacy arm of the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission.

Four race categories

Four races were held this year—the 3K (kilometer), 5K, 10K and the main event—the 42K marathon which retraced the route to freedom taken by Rajah Sulayman when he fled from Spanish invaders in 1571. The route took the runners through 11 of the Pasig River's 13 tributaries—from Intramuros, Manila to the Carlos Garcia-C5 Bridge in Pasig City—and five cities.

A total of 950 runners, which included international marathoner Robert Njoroge Wambugu, who flew in from Kenya, took part in the 42K race.

Wambugu managed to place 10th in the 42K, despite the fact that he had arrived just five hours before the race and even lost his luggage when he transferred to a connecting flight from Dubai.

AND THE WINNER is ... Cresenciano Sabal, an Army man, who bested over 900 runners to win the 42K marathon, the grand event in the race to rehabilitate the Pasig River. Flanking him are (from left) Ricardo Pascua of the Clean and Green Foundation, Jeong Ryeol Kim and Gerry Lacson of Samsung Philippines, race sponsors. JOCELYN P. DIMACULANGAN

Different motivation

The marathon, however, was won by a local—Cresenciano Sabal of the Philippine Army—who was not motivated neither by the cash prize nor the glory which came with winning.

Sabal said his inspiration for his two-month training for the race was his desire to participate in the drive to preserve a national treasure.

"*Kailangan i*-develop *ang* Pasig River *dahil ito yung unang tinitingnan ng mga taga-ibang bansa. Gusto nila tingnan yung mga kayamanan natin dito sa bansa*," he pointed out. "*Kahit may* duty *ako, humihingi ako ng* time *sa mga* officials *ko para makapag*-train," he added.

Sabal said he trained for three hours twice a week and ran a 42K route at least once a week to shape up for the marathon. His dedication paid off when he bested 950 other runners, crossing the finish line after two hours, 26 minutes and 13 seconds.

Being one of the country's most celebrated waterways, numerous poets and writers have dedicated odes to the once-pristine Pasig River, among them Jose Rizal and Francisco Balagtas. Equally unforgettable is the classic song "Mutya ng Pasig" by Nicanor Abelardo. National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin even said that it was the Pasig River that shaped Manila.

Rich cultural background

With such a rich historical and cultural background, it is no wonder why the nongovernment organization CGFI has been actively involved in the campaign to revitalize the river. "We hope to raise people's awareness of the need to rehabilitate the Pasig River," said Imelda Sarmiento, CGFI executive director.

Spearheading the drive is the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) which has been implementing several projects aimed at enhancing the surrounding areas near the river.

"Under Phase One of the Pasig River Development Plan, we have the relocation of families from the banks of the Pasig River, the conversion of cleared areas into 'linear parks' and the implementation of urban renewal projects," said Bingle Gutierrez, PRRC executive director.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The **Department of Education, Regional Office No. VIII** through its Bids and Awards Commitle (BAC), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract:

CLUSTER NUMBER	Name of Contract	Location	Approved Budget for the Contract	Contract Duration
Cluster I	1) Completion of School Buildings (2nd Phase) 2) Construction of 2 classroom sch. bldg. (7m x 9m)	Catarman Sped Center, Catarman, N. Samar Maydolong NHS Maydolong, E. Samar	965,000.00 1,544,000.00	
TOTAL			2,509,000.00	180 CD
Cluster II	1) Construction of 2 cl School Bldg. (7m x 9m) 2) Construction of 2 cl School Bldg. (7m x 9m) 3) Construction of 2 cl School Bldg. (7m x 7m)	Ybañez ES Tabango, Leyte Villaba Comprehensive NHS Lib-og PS Maasin City	772,000.00 772,000.00 607,950.00	
TOTAL			2,151,950.00	180 CD

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment (listed in the Eligibility Forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bids.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC Activities	Schedule
1. Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application of Eligibility & Issuance of Eligibility Forms	March 28 – April 11, 2006
2. Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	March 28 – April 12, 2006
3. Notice of Results of Eligibility Check	April 19, 2006
4. Issuance of Bid Documents	April 20 – April 27, 2006
5. Pre-Bid Conference	May 19, 2006, 2:00 p.m.
6. Receipt and Opening of Bids	May 31, 2006, 2:00 p.m.

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility forms at DepEd RO 8, Government Center, Candahug, Palo, Leyte, upon their submission of a LOI, prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility requirements to the DepEd RO BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check by the BAC at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for bidding upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **Php3,000.00** to the DepED RO 8 Cashier

The Deped RO 8 assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) **ATTY. ALBERTO T. ESCOBARTE**
OIC-Assistant Regional Director
BAC Chairman

(PDI–March 13 & 20, 2006)

AMENDMENT TO THE AMENDED MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

DATED FEBRUARY 14, 2006 DEFINING THE GUIDELINES ON TRANSFERABILITY OF TAX CREDIT CERTIFICATES ISSUED UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 226, THE OMNIBUS INVESTMENT CODE

Pursuant to Section 9 of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) dated October 13, 2000 executed by and between the Board of Investments (BOI) and the Department of Finance (DOF) in compliance with the provision of Article 21 of Executive Order No. 226 (E.O. 226) regarding the transferability of tax credit certificates (TCCs) issued under the said E.O., the following additional guidelines are hereby adopted:

"1. *Transfers by companies belonging to a distressed industry sector:*

Transferors belonging to an industry sector which BOI has assessed to be in distress shall be allowed to transfer their outstanding TCCs to any BOI registered transferees *and government financial institutions* without requiring them to comply with the conditions imposed under Section 1c, 1e and 1f of the prevailing MOA, *provided* that this type of transfer shall be allowed for one year only from official notification to the Center by BOI that the industry sector is in distress, without prejudice to renewal thereof upon approval by the Executive Committee."

"2. *Section 9 of the MOA is hereby amended to include the following paragraph:*

"Henceforth, in order to simplify the administrative process in amending the existing MOA, and since BOI and DOF are well represented in the Center's Excom, any amendment to the prevailing MOA including exceptions to the guidelines for meritorious consideration shall now be done through a resolution duly approved by the Center's Executive Committee which resolution shall be for implementation without the need for another MOA between BOI and DOF, subject to compliance with the provisions of EO 226 and with the required administrative procedures under the Administrative Code."

(Sgd.) **PETER B. FAVILA**
Secretary
Department of Trade & Industry

(Sgd.) **MARGARITO B. TEVES**
Secretary
Department of Finance

Signed in the presence of:

(Sgd.) **ELMER C. HERNANDEZ**
Undersecretary
Board of Investments

(Sgd.) **GAUDENCIO A. MENDOZA, JR.**
Undersecretary
DSS-CENTER

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES }
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION } S.S.
CITY OF MANILA }

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 09 day of MARCH, 2006 in the City of Manila, affiants exhibited to me their Community Tax Certificates as follows:

NAMES	CTC Number	ISSUED AT	ISSUED ON
MARGARITO B. TEVES	14026438	Manila	8-02-05
PETER B. FAVILA	20564958	Makati	2-24-06

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my notarial seal for the day, year, and place above written.

Doc. No. 188
Page No 39
Book No. . XII
Series of 2006

(Sgd.) **ATTY. JOAQUIN M. CHUA**
NOTARY PUBLIC MANILA
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(PDI March 13 20 & 27 2006)

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31 trash men drug users?

By DJ Yap

THIRTY-ONE OUT of 1,111 garbage collectors servicing Quezon City have failed the mandatory drug test conducted recently among workers of the local Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department (EPWMD).

Should succeeding tests confirm the initial results, the 31 garbage collectors and truck drivers will be blacklisted from working for the EPWMD, according to the city's public affairs and information services office.

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. recently ordered the mandatory drug testing after receiving complaints about the abusive behavior of some garbage collectors.

EPWMD head Frederika Rentoy said the drug tests were conducted between Feb. 28 and March 2.

Pressure mounts on Thailand to end crisis dogging Thaksin

BANGKOK—PRESSURE IS MOUNTING FOR a settlement of Thailand's political crisis, with observers saying Sunday they are concerned about the prospect of violence, economic damage and electoral gridlock.

An antigovernment movement that emerged last year has developed into a major political force in the last month, with a series of mass rallies calling for Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to quit.

But with two landslide election victories behind him and the firm support of voters in populous rural provinces, Thaksin has refused to give his opponents any ground and frustrated them by calling a snap poll to defuse the crisis.

Business leaders, commentators, royal advisers and police are now warning that Thailand has much to lose if the two camps do not quickly forge a compromise.

The Federation of Thai Industries, the largest group representing the business community, said the prospect of talks between Thaksin and his opponents was a positive sign.

"We want to see the conflict ended as soon as possible," federation vice chair Santi Vilassakdanont said Sunday.

Santi said the government must not allow the situation to fester and increase the risk of confrontation at the protests, which have drawn tens of thousands of people.

"If violence happens, it would hurt the country and the economy so badly," he said.

Already the political turmoil has forced Thailand to clip its economic growth forecast for 2006, and Santi said free-trade negotiations, planned infrastructure projects and investor confidence are being affected.

"I think the tourism industry will be the next thing to be impacted," he said, referring to the sector which represents 6 percent of the economy.

Another huge rally is planned for Monday night, culminating in a dawn march on Thaksin's offices to disrupt a regular weekly Cabinet meeting. The protests are led by civil society groups and mainly represent the middle classes. *AFP*

Mystery of vanished 'Buddha Boy' sparks nationwide search in Nepal

KATHMANDU—The weekend disappearance of a Nepalese boy whom supporters hail as a reincarnation of the Buddha has sparked a nationwide search.

Supporters have showered 16-year-old Ram Bahadur Bomjan with money and gifts for allegedly sitting in motionless meditation in the roots of a pipal tree without taking food or water, or using the toilet, since May 16 last year.

The youth, dubbed "Buddha Boy" by the media, left the site in southern Nepal because the thousands of devotees who flocked there had disturbed his meditation, media reported Sunday.

"He left as there was a lot of noise in the meditation area," his friend Prem Lama told the Kathmandu Post.

A search using plain-clothes police and civilians failed to find the boy, but he had been glimpsed in the jungle surrounding the meditation site at Bara district 250 kilometers south of Kathmandu, the Himalayan Times reported.

Inspector Kamal Acharya told AFP he was "90 percent sure" the boy disappeared voluntarily. "It does not seem likely that it was an abduction," said Acharya. a police inspector from Bara.

Police believed the youth had left the site with a close friend Sahila Tamang, who was also missing, Acharya said.

"The boy disappeared at around three in the morning Saturday while the people who guard the site were sleeping," Shankar Acharya, a journalist from Bara, told AFP.

The thousands of visitors who have flocked to see the boy were kept at least 15 meters away.

The boy's followers did not permit visitors to see him during the night, raising skepticism about claims that he had been surviving without food and water.

Ram's meditation spawned a mini-industry with the site jammed with food and souvenir vendors.

Rupees were stuffed in collection boxes around the site and a member of a committee looking after the site said foreign Buddhist groups had donated $40,000 for its upkeep. *AFP*

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD Nepalese boy Ram Bahadur Bomjan, who supporters say is a reincarnation of the Buddha because of his ability to meditate without food and water. AFP

Cheney's full name bared at Washington media roast

WASHINGTON — PRESIDENT George W. Bush headlined the annual Gridiron Club political press roast, but Vice President Dick Cheney was the main target of the humor.

Cheney's well-publicized Texas hunting accident last month drew ridicule from the press corps and all the speakers at Saturday night's event, including the president.

Bush pointed out that the vice president's full name is Richard B. Cheney.

"B. stands for Bulls-eye," Bush said to laughter from the hundreds of reporters and officials from the administration and Congress. The press, Bush joked, blew the matter way out of proportion: "Good Lord, you'd thought he shot somebody or something."

Cheney, who sat at the head table, laughed along with most of the jokes.

Bush said that while pundits speculate about whether Cheney or White House political adviser Karl Rove run the government, it's another person who actually pulls the strings. Cheney, Bush said, tells him what to do but Cheney's wife, Lynne, tells the vice president what to do.

"Lynne, I think you're doing a heck of a job. Although I have to say you dropped the ball big time on that Dubai deal," he said, in a joke about the controversial ports deal.

Lynne Cheney was the Republican speaker and opened by saying that because she came late in the program "the hunting jokes have been used."

Founded in 1885, the invitation-only Gridiron Club is the oldest organization for Washington journalists. It exists only for the annual dinner. Now in its 121st year, the Gridiron claims to "singe, but never burn."

REUTERS

R. B. CHENEY: Broad target

The Democratic speaker was Illinois Sen. Barack Obama who sang "If I Only Had McCain"—a parody of "The Wizard of Oz" song "If I Only Had a Brain."

His song alluded to a recent spat with Sen. John McCain over ethics reform. Obama was the lead Democrat on the issue, which has been a signature cause of the Arizona Republican.

Democrats didn't have an easier time than the Republicans and were mocked for being in disarray over their party's message and strategy, its position on the Iraq war and even whom to field for president in 2008.

"What do we stand for? We don't know. What's our platform? We ain't sure. All we know is Dubya's got it wrong," reporters sang, using a nickname for Bush.

The travails of House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi of California also came in for a ribbing. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Captors tortured American, Iraq says

FOX REUTERS

BAGHDAD—Tom Fox, the kidnapped American peace worker whose body was found last week, had apparently been tortured by his captors before being shot multiple times in the head and dumped on a trash heap in western Baghdad, an official at the Iraqi Interior Ministry said Saturday. The body was discovered Thursday stuffed in a plastic bag, the official said, adding that Fox, 54, of Clearbrook, Va., had been bound at the wrists and ankles. In apparent response to the discovery, the US military raided homes in Jamiya, a middle-class residential neighborhood near where Fox's body was found. The authorities said the body was being flown back to the United States for forensic analysis. Fox and his three colleagues—James Loney, 41, and Harmeet Singh Sooden, 32, of Canada; and Norman Kember, 74, of Britain—were kidnapped on Nov. 26. All four were in Iraq working for Christian Peacemaker Teams, which promotes peace and human rights in conflict zones. *NYT*

Ex-Afghan president survives suicide attack

KABUL—A former Afghan president who heads a government commission seeking to encourage Taliban defections survived a suicide bomb attack on Sunday in Kabul, a senior police official said. At least two people, including a suicide car bomber, were killed in the blast aimed at Sibghatullah Mojadidi, who also chairs the upper house of parliament, or Senate. Mojadidi was in a car being driven on a busy main road from his house toward the city center when the attack occurred, police said. "The aim of the attack was Mr. Mojadidi," Zalmai Oryakhel, the senior police officer for the area, told Reuters. "He survived, but one pedestrian and the suicide attacker were killed and four other civilians were wounded. He said police suspected an al-Qaida militant allied to the Taliban rebels carried out the attack. *Reuters*

Another $15M recovered in UK heist

LONDON—British police on Thursday announced they had found another large stash of money as they continue to investigate the country's largest cash robbery. Detectives with Kent police announced that a stack of currency recovered in a garage in the town of Southborough on Sunday was worth 8.6 million pounds (US$14.9 million). Of the 53 million pounds (US$92 million) stolen from the Securitas cash warehouse, 19.7 million pounds (US$34.1 million) has been found by police. So far, 17 people have been arrested in connection with the Feb. 22 raid on the warehouse and five people—four men and a woman— have been charged. *AP*

Coffee or soda? Both, say Americans

NEW YORK—More Americans are drinking a cup of coffee every day, putting Java virtually neck-and-neck with such soft drinks as cola, according to an industry report released on Saturday. Preliminary data from the National Coffee Association of USA's "2006 National Coffee Drinking Trends" showed the percent of US consumers who drink coffee each day rose to 56 percent in 2006 from 53 percent in 2005 and 49 percent in 2004. *Reuters*

Sorbonne student protest

PARIS—French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin prepared on Sunday to defend his unpopular labor reforms after riot police stormed the historic Sorbonne university in Paris to end a protest over the new law. Villepin was scheduled to give a major television interview a day after riot police smashed their way into the faculty's halls in the heart of the capital's Latin Quarter and dragged some 200 demonstrators from the building. The students started their sit-in on Wednesday in the university, birthplace of the May 1968 student protest movement, to denounce moves to loosen France's rigid labor laws and make it easier for employers to hire and fire people aged under 26. "This is what happens when you call for disorder," Education Minister Gilles de Robien said as he visited the Sorbonne's ransacked offices, holding up torn books at the site where a 1968 rebellion that weakened President Charles de Gaulle began. The labor reforms are the brainchild of Villepin, a member of the ruling Gaullist UMP party, and came in response to widespread suburban unrest around France five months ago that was blamed in part on high levels of youth unemployment *Reuters*

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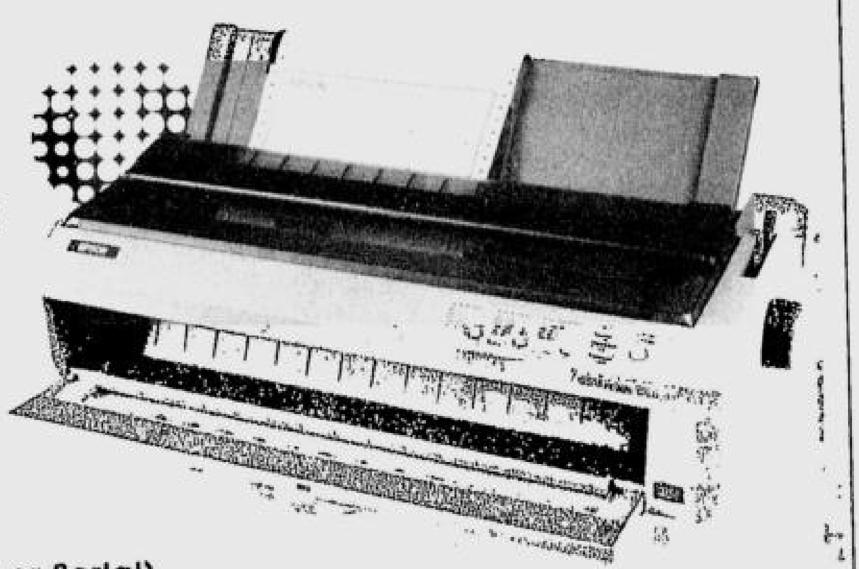

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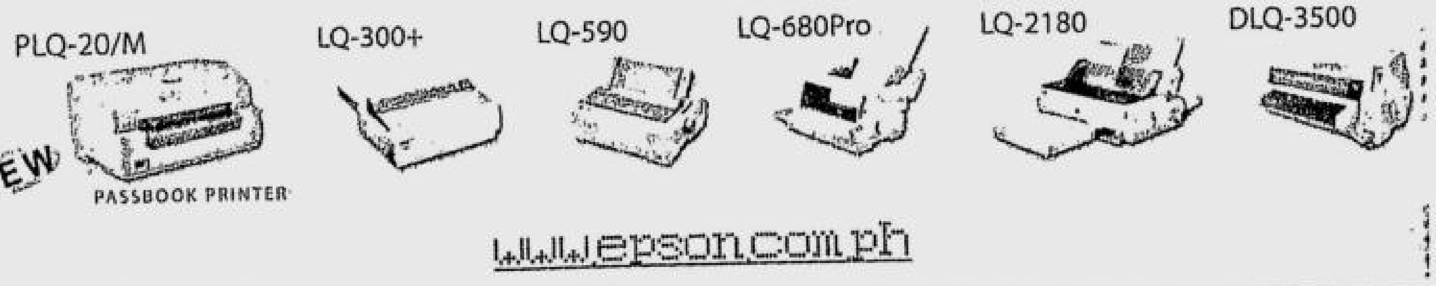

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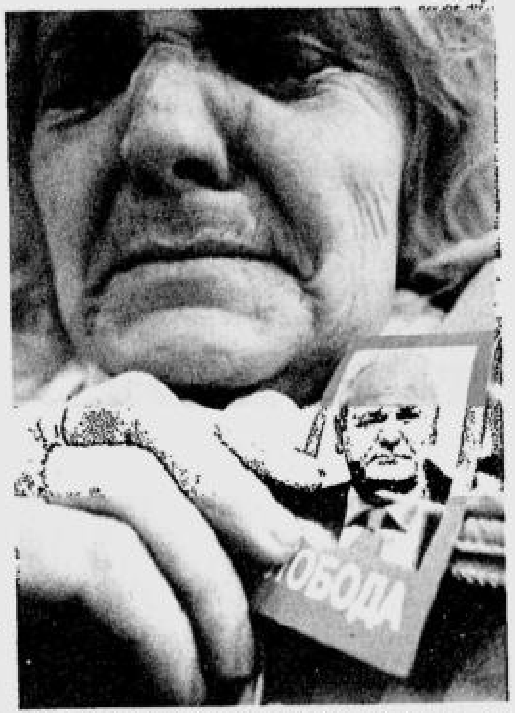
The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Milosevic clung to myth of Serb pain to the last

By Roger Cohen

TO THE LAST, A SOLITARY DEATH ON SATURDAY IN A UN CELL near an international court he derided, Slobodan Milosevic clung to the notion that all the Balkan destruction he ignited and presided over was no more than a response to aggression against his long-suffering Serbian people.



A MILOSEVIC supporter in tears March 11. AP

"My aim is to present the truth, and that takes time," the former Serbian president told the tribunal in The Hague, a prelude to painstaking circumlocutions that sought over a period of more than four years to cast the author of Yugoslavia's destruction as a misunderstood man bent only on that country's defense.

In fact, the truth for Milosevic was always a commodity to be manipulated in the single-minded pursuit of power. Everyone—Croats reinvented as World War II fascists, Bosnian Muslims recast as marauding Ottoman Turks, multiplying Kosovo Albanians redrawn as agents of "demographic genocide" against the Serbs—was fit material for Milosevic's overriding myth of Serbian suffering.

Deploying a blunt slogan—"Serbia does not kneel"—Milosevic, who died at age 64, engineered a giddy apotheosis from what had been a humdrum career as a banker and communist bureaucrat.

His method was unsubtle—the defense of Serbs and a glorious vision of Serbian history—but it played well to a people with a long-held conviction that Tito's communist Yugoslavia had cheated them of a rightful power.

The result was a violence not seen in Europe since 1945. No Stalin, no Hitler, Milosevic nevertheless proved himself over 13 years in power to be a ruler of exceptional ruthlessness always ready to use force in a series of wars, from Croatia in 1991 to Kosovo in 1999.

In effect, Milosevic destroyed the delicate balance of the Yugoslavia he professed to defend and then expressed wonderment at its violent destruction. "Who, me?" he always seemed to ask, both as leader and later during his long season in court, when confronted with the repetitive evidence of his own destructiveness.

By the time Yugoslavia began to unravel in 1991 in a series of wars that left more than 200,000 people dead, Milosevic had quashed the autonomy of Kosovo and another province, Vojvodina, and installed a subservient leadership in Montenegro. As a result, he controlled four votes in the eight-member collective Yugoslav presidency.

Nothing Milosevic said during more than four years in court suggests that he ever engaged in self-reproach or questioning of any kind. *The New York Times Service*

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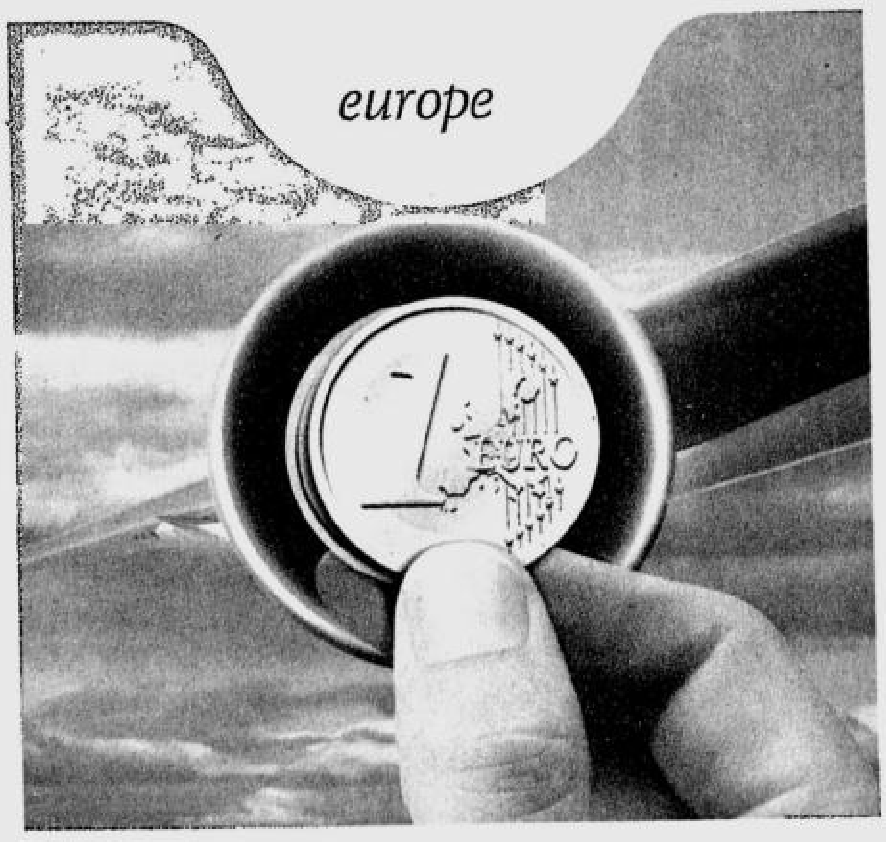

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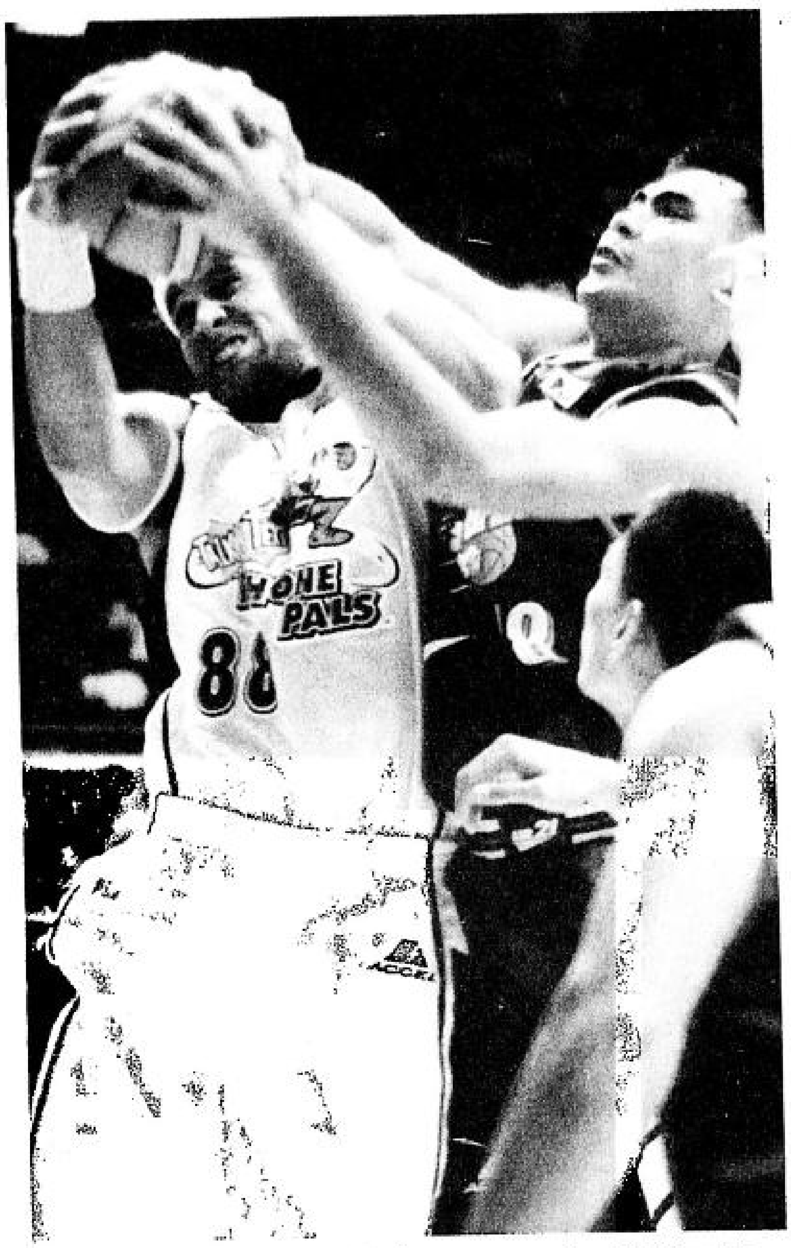
Express thwart Pals behind gutsy finish



ASI Taulava of Talk 'N Text (left) disputes possession with Yancy De Ocampo of Air21 during their game last night. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

By June Navarro

IT WAS SWEET REVENGE FOR MARK TELAN.

Still bitter over the trade that sent him to Air21, the former Talk 'N Text center got back at his former team through a 105-102 Express victory over the Phone Pals last night in the Gran Matador Brandy-PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

"I wanted to get back at them for trading me before the conference," said Telan, who swapped places with John Ferriols during the mid-season break.

"It hurts. I also wanted to win badly after we lost our first game."

Telan posted double-double figures of 16 points and 13 rebounds, joining hands in the last quarter with Niño Cañaleta and Renren Ritualo, who tossed in 18 markers each as the Express bounced back from an opening-day loss to Coca-Cola.

In the second game, Barangay Ginebra scored its second straight victory, coming from behind to beat Sta. Lucia, 98-93.

Mark Caguioa had 23 points while Romel Adducul had 21 points and 19 rebounds to fill in for Erik Menk, who played just the opening minutes of the match and rode the bench the rest of the way.

Menk, who suffered an ankle sprain early on, made a cameo appearance towards the end of the match in a defensive stand for the Kings, who rallied from several double-digit deficits to send the Realtors to their second straight defeat.

Cañaleta's three-pointer off the glass and a slam by Ranidel de Ocampo over Harvey Carey gave the Express a 102-97 cushion with 59 ticks left which the Phone Pals whittled down to three with 10 seconds left.

But the Phone Pals ran out of time with the referees, after consulting television replays, nullifying a game-tying triple by Willie Miller after an earlier miss by Jimmy Alapag.

The TV replay showed there was no time left when Miller unleashed his desperation trey, thus dooming Talk 'N Text to its second straight defeat in the conference under new coach Derrick Pumaren.

"I told them that [former import] Shawn (Daniels) is no longer with us," said Air21 coach Bo Perasol. "Somebody has to fill the void left by Shawn because if we play the same way as the last conference, nothing will happen to us."

With help coming from Daniels during the import-laced Fiesta conference, the Express barged into the semifinals for the first time in franchise history and eventually placed third—Air21's best result in a PBA tournament.

The scores:

First Game

AIR21 105—Cañaleta 18, Ritualo 18, Telan 16, Arboleda 15, Y. De Ocampo 14, Tubid 8, R. De Ocampo 7, Se 4, Dacia 2, Bernardo 2, Fran 1.

TALK 'N TEXT 102—Alapag 30, Taulava 22, Pablo 14, Miller 10, Carey 8, Cardona 5, Ferriols 4, Villoria 4, Avenido 3, Meneses 2, Junio 0.

Quarters: 21-30, 45-49, 67-75, 105-102

Second Game

GINEBRA 98—Caguioa 23, Adducul 21, Helterbrand 19, Ferreria 14, Holper 8, Santos 8, Sotto 5, Macapagal 0, Echavez 0, Salvacion 0, Menk 0.

STA. LUCIA 93—Espino 18, Tolomia 15, Duremdes 15, Cabagnot 11, Mendoza 10, Aquino 8, Catli 5, Gonzales 5, Calimag 2, Omolon 2, Demape 2.

Quarters: 22-26, 39-49, 66-71, 98-93

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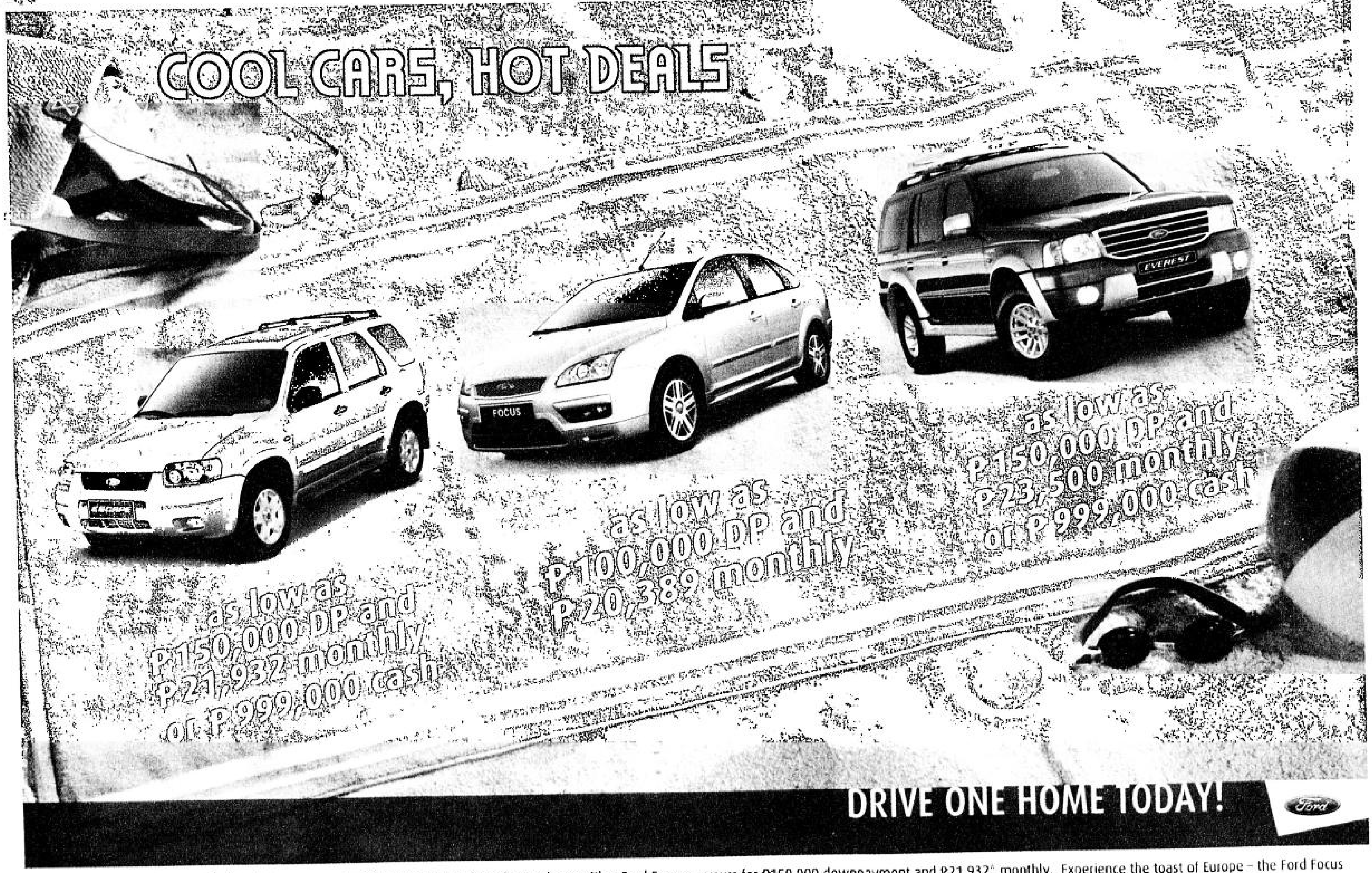
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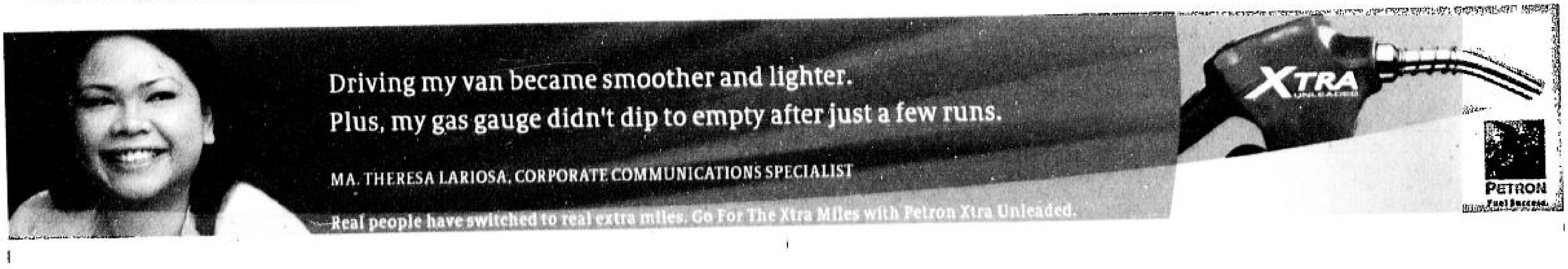
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Warriors now a UAAP threat after ripping Lions

UNIVERSITY OF THE EAST SENT A strong message to the rest of the pack in the UAAP with a 93-76 rout of San Beda Sunday to win the men's basketball championship of the second Home and Away Invitational League (Hail) at the UE Gym.

The Warriors, who lost their first two games in the only home-and-away collegiate basketball league in the country, humbled the Red Lions, who were in the fight only in the first two quarters.

The Recto-based champs surged on top, 59-45, after the third quarter and the crowd celebrated with still a full quarter to go.

Coach Dindo Pumaren said winning the crown was a bonus to "lessons learned" during the runup to the finals of the league organized by Waffle Marketing Inc. and sponsored by Adidas, the official sportswear, and Sunbolt, the official sports drink.

"In every game here, we treat it as a practice for the UAAP," said Pumaren. "We lost our first two games, but those losses taught us things and we tried to improve in our succeeding games."

Bonbon Custodio, named the league's Most Valuable Player, carried the brunt of the scoring for UE as he finished with 26 points. Mark Borboran added 15, Elmer Espiritu had 13 and James Martinez, a former San Beda junior player, chipped in 11.

But the Warriors also laid down a tight defensive net that saw key San Beda players struggle in scoring.

San Beda's top gun Riego Gamalinda was limited to eight points while Ogie Menor wound up with only five markers.

Nigerian Samuel Ekwe scored 26 to lead the Red Lions, but most of them came late in the second half when the Warriors had already settled the issue.

JP Escobal added 18 but he, too, struggled against the tireless defense of the Warriors, who led by as many as 21, 82-61.

Meanwhile, Far Eastern University, led by MVP Kathrina Nido, downed University of Santo Tomas, 73-65, to bag the women's crown.

Ateneo, which lost to UE in their knockout semifinal match, won the 3-point shootout through Jai Reyes and the slam dunk competition through Japeth Aguilar.

Hail president Mark Molina and Waffle officials Auty Villarama and Rely Agustin presented the trophies to the winners.

The scores:

UE 93—Custodio 26, Borboran 15, Espiritu 13, Martinez 11, Arellano 9, Lingganoy 5, Bondaying 5, Petrone 4, Gregorio 4, Labagala 1, Briones 0, Nabo 0, Acuna 0.

SBC 76—Ekwe 21, Escobal 18, Tecson 9, Gamalinda 8, Evangelista 8, Menor 5, Maggay 2, Tirona 1, Suguitan 0, Taganas 0.

Quarters: 25-18, 36-34, 59-45, 93-76

Casio bolsters Toyota Otis in PBL Unity Cup

By Jasmine W. Payo

LA SALLE STANDOUT JV CASIO WILL BRING his clutch shooting to the Philippine Basketball League after signing up with a Toyota Otis squad laden with point guards and fellow Archers for the upcoming Unity Cup tournament.

Casio, known for his ability to hit the big shots, becomes the fourth playmaker in the Knights' roster and the third Archer in the team that now teems with talent.

He will play for a coach who is optimistic about his capabilities on the court.

"He's a thinking player," said coach Louie Alas. "He's tailor-made for us."

Two weeks ago, Harbour Centre also enlisted La Salle mainstays Rico Maierhofer and Ryan Araña.

Several Archers did not see action in the last two PBL conferences after ICTSI-La Salle took a leave of absence from the premier amateur league last year.

Casio averaged 9.5 points, 3.4 rebounds and 1.2 steals in the last UAAP season. He joins a roster that already boasts of top amateur point guards Boyet Bautista and JP Alcaraz of Letran and the seasoned Christian Coronel.

Aside from Casio, the Knights also recently acquired Patrick Cabahug of Adamson University, Chris Baluyot of San Sebastian College and Marco Fajardo of Jose Rizal University.

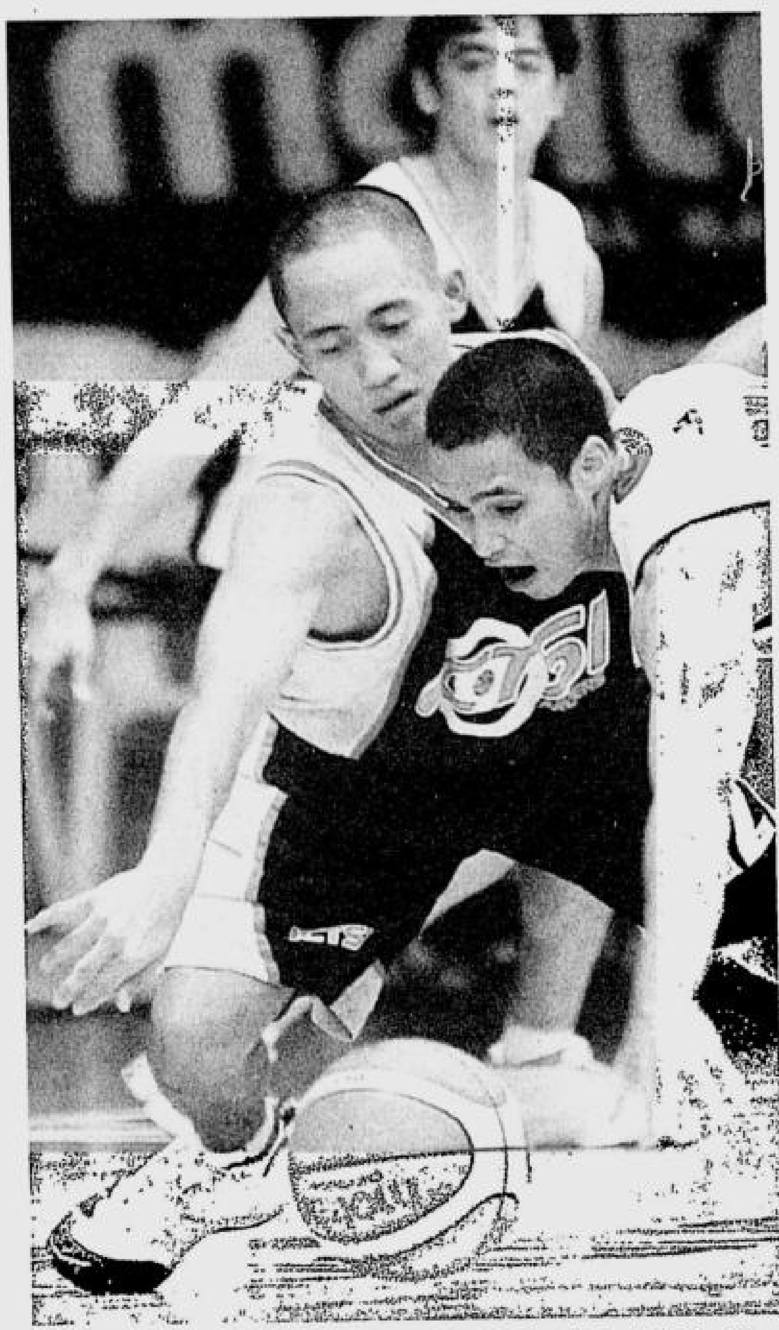
Alas hopes the late additions would spark a turnaround for the struggling Knights, who finished dead last in the previous two conferences despite fielding the core of Letran's 2005 NCAA champion squad led by stalwarts Aaron Aban, Jonathan Aldave, Mark Andaya and Erick Rodriguez.

The inclusion of 6-foot-7 Filipino-American Joe Devance also failed to resuscitate the Knights' campaign in the recent Heroes Cup tournament.

"There's no way but up for us," said Alas. "And I think this is the best time for my veteran players to shine, since most of them also want to play in the pro league.

"But I told them they have to prioritize the team first before their personal agenda."

The Knights surprised the league by finishing a best-ever third in their debut campaign in 2003.



A THINKING player, according to coach Louie Alas, JV Casio (left) will be an asset to a team that needs his shooting touch and hustle. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Yee, R'riguez rule As-Pac junior golf qualifying

MICO YEE AND CYNA Rodriguez topped the recent qualifying for the Asia-Pacific junior championship conducted by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines at the Orchard and Puerto Azul courses in Cavite.

Yee won Class A with plenty to spare while Rodriguez turned in the best score in the girls' division as Class B champion in the 36-hole series which also served as the final school season event of the Samsung Jungolf Tour.

Yee scored a 71 at Orchard and then an 81 at Puerto Azul for a 152 aggregate, way ahead of the long-hitting Gino Bunyi who had 78-86—164.

Rodriguez posted 79-80—159 to handily beat Paulina Sotto (91-80—171) in her division.

Bambee dela Paz also qualified for the Asia-Pacific tourney, slated April 29 to May 2 at the Singapore Island Golf and Country Club in Singapore, after winning Class A with an 86-85—171.

Bino dela Paz and Dottie Ardina prevailed in Class C while JR Gonzales and Kim Mingi were the champions in the Class D category.

Dela Paz (88-82—170) scored a five-shot victory, over Michael Limandibrata, Ardina had 74-74—148 to beat Sunmi Hwang (171), JR Gonzales carded 80-78—158 and Kim 94-87—181 beat another Korean girl Ahn Sieun (196).

COMMISSIONER'S CUP

Real Spicy sets another track mark

By Musong R. Castillo

REAL SPICY BUCKLED DOWN TO work early and won the 2006 Philracom Commissioner's Cup in wire-to-wire style yesterday to remain undefeated for the year.

The handsome charger jumped out strong and finished even stronger to win by seven lengths over Chariot of Fire and establish a new track record over 1,800 meters at the Santa Ana Park.

Real Spicy clocked 27 seconds in the final quarter under mild urging from Jesse B. Guce to register a record 1 minute 52 seconds flat. That eclipsed the old mark of 1:52.6 set by imported horse Being There.

"I just showed him the whip when we rounded for home," said Guce in Filipino. "The horse is just in perfect shape."

The four-year-old son of Real Quiet out of Spicy Tale won his fourth straight start this year, and owner Hermie Esguerra said he plans to race Real Spicy two more times before the Silver Cup on May 14.

"We will just have to sustain his form and I think we'll be okay," Esguerra said. "We are preparing him for the Silver Cup, which is a virtual championship for locally-bred horses."

The win was worth P600,000 for Esguerra, who picked up another P185,000 for Moab's third place finish, plus the champion breeder's purse of P60,000.

Cool Runnings, who was partnered by Val Dilema, checked in fourth and last for P50,000.

The winner of the third leg of last year's Triple Crown, Real Spicy refused to yield the lead to speedball Chariot of Fire and was three lengths ahead when the field passed the judges' stand.

Real Spicy cornered P1,082,146 out of the total daily double pool of P1,171,878 as top bettors' choice.

He submitted quarter clockings of 13.5-23.5-24-24-27 in achieving a fourth track mark.

He also holds the record for 1,450 meters (1:29) and 1,500 meters (1:31), both at Santa Ana, and the mile (1:39) at the San Lazaro Leisure Park in Carmona, Cavite.

Kimoni Tour to showcase collegiate stars

A BANNER ROSTER OF TOP UNIVERSITIES and colleges will take a crack at prizes worth P370,000 in the intercollegiate championship that has been added to the ongoing Kimoni Badminton Tour 2006.

Prizes worth P220,000 (P50,000 cash on top of P170,000 worth of Kimoni products) goes to the winning team in the tournament slated June 24-25 at the Olympic Badminton Club in Libis, Quezon City.

The runner-up gets P30,000 cash plus P70,000 worth of Kimoni products and the third-placer P15,000 cash and P35,000 worth of products.

Entry forms can be submitted to the Kimoni head office at 39 Bingo Street, Sta. Mesa Heights, Quezon City. Deadline for submission of entries is on June 9. For inquiries, call the Kimoni office at 414-5258 or contact MindWorks c/o Gary Tulio at 0917-7961345, 0922-8134399, 410-4399 or Willy Agbulos at 0917-8419835.

Meanwhile, Ruel Inciong teamed up with Ted Jimenez to clinch the top level of the men's doubles in the second leg of the Kimoni Badminton Tour 2006 at the Bacolod Shuttlers' Haven. Inciong and Jimenez prevailed, 15-8, 15-13, over Mark Antonio and Jobie Limas of Bacolod.

In level 1 of the ladies' doubles, the Medy Martinez-Hailey Tan pair outlasted the Jinky Co-Grace Constantino tandem, 15-5, 2-15, 15-4.

Lynette Esico and Reniel Japsay from Roxas district turned back the tough challenge of John Paul Deanon and Hillary Baje in the juniors 16-under via a 15-4, 15-4 decision, while Ernesto Lavao and Merry Joy Fernandez scored a 15-10, 15-0 rout of Christian Crisostomo and Niki Servando in the 15 under play.

Young Fide Master So nips Paragua, Nadera for crown

Final standings:

6.0 pts.—FM Wesley So, IM Barlo Nadera, GM Mark Paragua; 5.5—FM Jesse Noel Sales, NM Alex Milagrosa; 5.0—IM Richard Bitoon, FM Adrian Ros Pacis, NM Emmanuel Senador, NM Andrew Vasquez, NM Efren Bagamasbad, Rogelio Valdez

SO: Whiz kid

YOUNG FIDE MASTER Wesley So edged International Master Barlo Nadera and Grandmaster Mark Paragua to win the Mayor Allen G. Singson Cup Sunday at the KEA Mall and Fun Center in Candon City, Ilocos Sur.

So, the 12-year-old whiz kid, finished tied for first with Nadera and Paragua with six points each but was declared the winner of the event by virtue of a superior tiebreak points.

The champion wound up with a 33.0 Bucholz tiebreak points as against Nadera's 28.5 and Paragua's 22. But the three split the combined purse of P22,000 for the top three places.

Using the white pieces in the seventh and final round, So outplayed NM Mirabeau Maga in 34 moves of an English Opening.

Nadera and Paragua both won with black to tie So. Nadera downed NM Emmanuel Senador in 30 moves of a Reti Opening and Paragua beat IM Richard Bitoon in 36 moves of a Sicilian Defense.

Chardine Cheradee Camacho of Caba, La Union and Patrick Dulay of Vigan won the under-16 and under-12 titles, respectively. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

Estimo tops chess polls; Pichay gains board seat

LONGTIME CHESS OFFICIAL SAMUEL ESTIMO topped the National Chess Federation of the Philippines elections Saturday night at the Celebrity Sports Plaza in Diliman, Quezon City.

The incumbent secretary-general garnered 702 votes to lead the 15-man board of directors.

Former Philippine Tennis Association president Salvador Andrada, represented the POC in the polls which took 14 hours to finish.

The new board will meet again to elect the new officers of the association, the sole governing body for chess in the country.

Also retaining their seats in the board were NCFP chair Matias Defensor, outgoing president Go Teng Kok, retired general Arturo Carillo, Jess Torre, Romeo Seratubias, Willie Abalos, Red Dumuk, Casto "Toti" Abundo and Eduardo Madrid.

The new members of the board are Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay, Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino Jr., Raul Molintas, Edmundo Legaspi and five-time executive champion Dr. Jenny Mayor.

Pichay, the popular congressman from Surigao del Sur, is said to be the strongest candidate for president. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

SPORTSWATCH

Busy sked in PSA Forum tomorrow

TRIATHLON, BASKETBALL AND MOTORSPORTS HEADLINE TOMORROW'S busy session in the PSA Forum at the main function room of the Pantalan Restaurant in Manila. Triathlon Association of the Philippines president Tom Carrasco and Abby Fojas of Lakeshore resort in Mexico, Pampanga, will discuss the Asian Aquathlon Championship slated next month, while former cage coach Virgil Villavicencio and Anthony Suntay talk about the Filoil Flying V Homegrown Cup. Also appearing in the program aired live over Sports Radio and sponsored by Pagcor and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza is Macky Carapiet who will discuss the FIM-UAM 2006 Motocross Master of Asia.

Milo BEST volleyball clinics slated

VOLLEYBALL, ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING SPORTS IN THE COUNtry today, gets an additional exposure with the staging of the Milo BEST Center's women's volleyball summer clinics early next month. Classes will be held at the Ateneo Grade School courts on Mondays and Thursdays (1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.) from April 3 to 27 and at San Beda College-Manila on Tuesdays and Fridays (8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.) from April 4 to 28. Veteran national coach Florentino "Kid" Santos and national players George Pascua and Joseph Santos will conduct the clinics. For inquiries, call 411-6260 or 372-3065.

NCA's 'very best' competing at Roligon

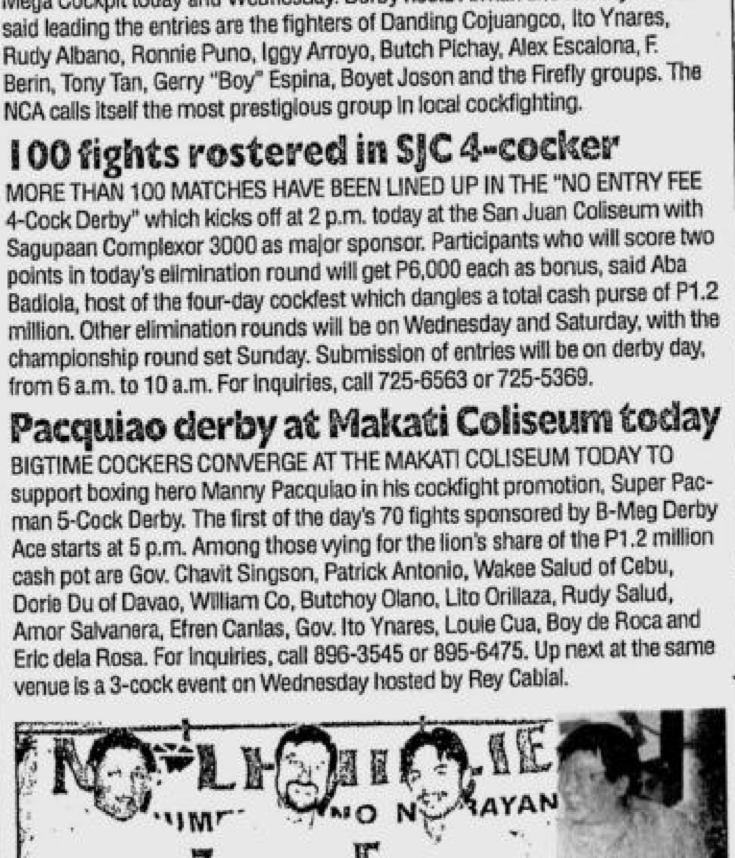
FIFTY FIGHTS FEATURING THE BEST BIRDS OF NCA MEMBERS' COCK farms are on tap in the National Cockers Association's derby at the Roligon Mega Cockpit today and Wednesday. Derby hosts Arman and Manny Santos said leading the entries are the fighters of Danding Cojuangco, Ito Ynares, Rudy Albano, Ronnie Puno, Iggy Arroyo, Butch Pichay, Alex Escalona, F. Berin, Tony Tan, Gerry "Boy" Espina, Boyet Joson and the Firefly groups. The NCA calls itself the most prestigious group in local cockfighting.

100 fights rostered in SJC 4-cocker

MORE THAN 100 MATCHES HAVE BEEN LINED UP IN THE "NO ENTRY FEE 4-Cock Derby" which kicks off at 2 p.m. today at the San Juan Coliseum with Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as major sponsor. Participants who will score two points in today's elimination round will get P6,000 each as bonus, said Aba Badiola, host of the four-day cockfest which dangles a total cash purse of P1.2 million. Other elimination rounds will be on Wednesday and Saturday, with the championship round set Sunday. Submission of entries will be on derby day, from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. For inquiries, call 725-6563 or 725-5369.

Pacquiao derby at Makati Coliseum today

BIGTIME COCKERS CONVERGE AT THE MAKATI COLISEUM TODAY TO support boxing hero Manny Pacquiao in his cockfight promotion, Super Pacman 5-Cock Derby. The first of the day's 70 fights sponsored by B-Meg Derby Ace starts at 5 p.m. Among those vying for the lion's share of the P1.2 million cash pot are Gov. Chavit Singson, Patrick Antonio, Wakee Salud of Cebu, Dorie Du of Davao, William Co, Butchoy Olano, Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud, Amor Salvanera, Efren Canlas, Gov. Ito Ynares, Louie Cua, Boy de Roca and Eric dela Rosa. For inquiries, call 896-3545 or 895-6475. Up next at the same venue is a 3-cock event on Wednesday hosted by Rey Cabial.



PACMAN'S PARTNER: Boxing hero Manny Pacquiao (third from left) and Michel Lhuillier, head of M. Lhuillier Group of Companies, formalize with a handshake a recent agreement making the "people's champ" as the company's newest endorser in print and television. With them are multititled coach and Cebu City Councilor Raul "Yayoy" Alcoseba (left) and boxing promoter Rex "Wakee" Salud.

Wizards club Pistons

Arenas weaves magic; Deng powers Bulls

WASHINGTON—GILBERT ARENAS scored 34 points as the Washington Wizards beat the Detroit Pistons for the second time this season with a 110-92 victory Saturday.

Caron Butler added 30 points for the Wizards, who snapped a two-game winning streak and won for just the second time in their past seven games.

Washington (31-30) and Utah are the only teams to beat the Pistons twice this season, with the Wizards the only Eastern Conference team to win in Detroit.

Arenas was the key for the Wizards, as he continued his strong play since being snubbed for the All-Star Game. Arenas did get into the game, but only as an injury replacement.

"My team was behind me, they were ready to go," Arenas told reporters.

"You use whatever you can for motivation. If there was some because of the All-Star selections, well that's okay with me."

Detroit (49-12) still has the best record in the NBA despite the loss. But the Pistons have lost three of their last five games, their worst stretch of the season, under first year coach Flip Saunders, who also coached the East All-Stars.

"It's probably just being a little over-confident," Detroit's Chauncey Billups told reporters after the game.

Rasheed Wallace led the Pistons with 18 points and nine rebounds, but Detroit made just five of 19 3-point attempts, while Washington made 12 of its 24 3-point attempts.

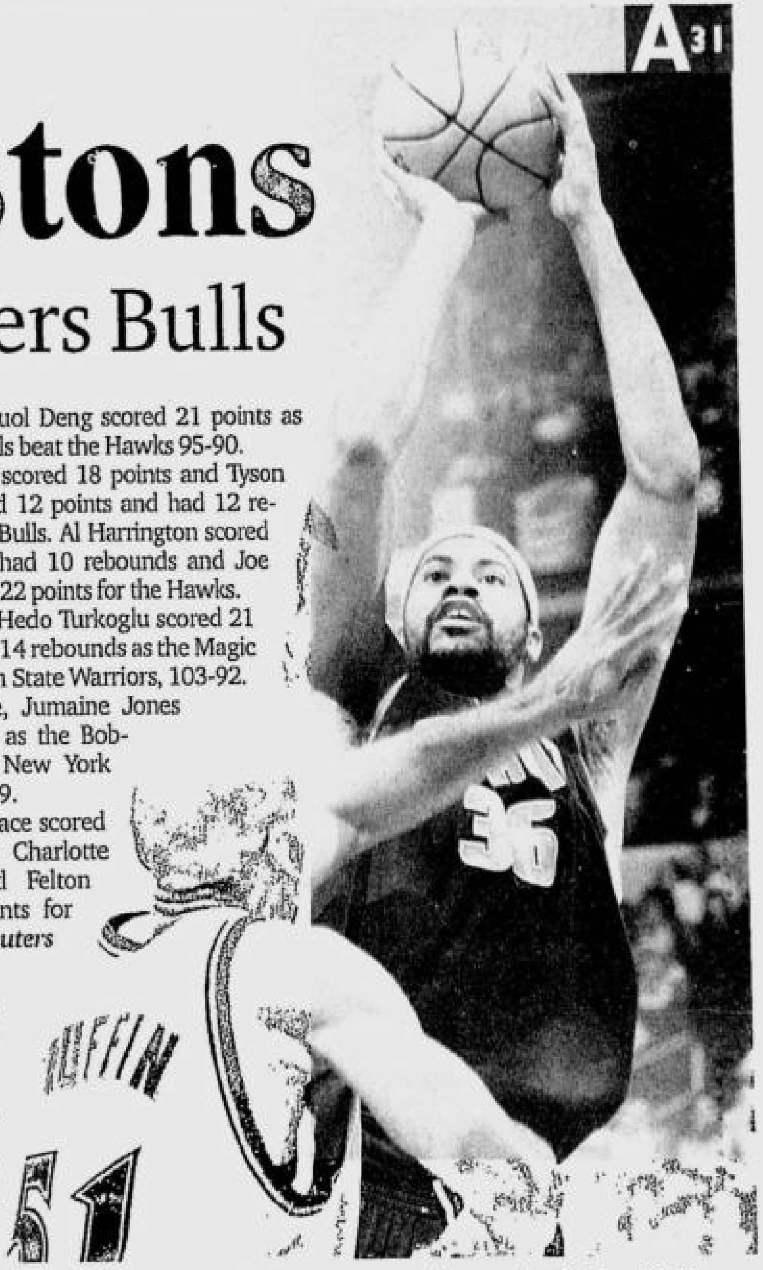
In Atlanta, Luol Deng scored 21 points as the Chicago Bulls beat the Hawks 95-90.

Kirk Hinrich scored 18 points and Tyson Chandler scored 12 points and had 12 rebounds for the Bulls. Al Harrington scored 32 points and had 10 rebounds and Joe Johnson added 22 points for the Hawks.

In Orlando, Hedo Turkoglu scored 21 points and had 14 rebounds as the Magic beat the Golden State Warriors, 103-92.

In Charlotte, Jumaine Jones had 28 points as the Bobcats beat the New York Knicks, 116-109.

Gerald Wallace scored 16 points for Charlotte and Raymond Felton added 20 points for the Knicks. *Reuters*



DETROIT'S Rasheed Wallace puts up a shot against Michael Ruffin. AFP

SCHUMACHER AFP

Ferrari revival elates director

MANAMA, BAHRAIN—FERRARI technical director Ross Brawn hailed the achievements of the team's two drivers after the former world champions secured the top places for Sunday's Bahrain Grand Prix. Seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher clinched pole position Saturday, edging new teammate Felipe Massa. Last season saw Ferrari lose both their drivers' and constructors' titles, as the team struggled with new technical regulations. Schumacher won just one race last season, the controversial US Grand Prix in which just six cars raced. The German driver was ecstatic to have equaled legendary Brazilian Aryton Senna's number of 65 pole positions. *AFP*

Injury freezes McGrady anew

NEW YORK—TRACY MCGRADY of the Houston Rockets could miss up to five weeks due to his ailing back, the National Basketball Association team said on Saturday.

The 26-year-old McGrady has already missed 15 games due to his back problems this season, knocking him out of the lineup on three different occasions.

Houston is just 2-13 without its leading scorer in the lineup as the Rockets try and catch the Los Angeles Lakers for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

The Lakers lead the Rockets by three games, despite a recent winning streak by Houston. The Rockets have won four straight and 10 of their last 13. *Reuters*

Annika shares lead in Mexico

ANNIKA Sorenstam consults her caddie at the second hole. AFP

HUIXQUILUCAN, MEXICO—DEFENDING champion Annika Sorenstam maintained a share of the lead in the MasterCard Classic on Saturday, shooting a 1-under 71 to match Paula Creamer and Mi Hyun Kim at 6 under.

Creamer had a 67—the best round of the day—and Kim shot a 69.

Sorenstam is making her first official LPGA Tour start since winning the ADT Championship in November and her first competitive appearance since teaming with Liselotte Neumann in January to win the Women's World Cup in South Africa.

"I actually had a higher score than I expected, so I don't necessarily know if I was expecting to be leading," she said. "I thought I played a little better than the score said."

Frost on the course in Huixquilucan, outside Mexico City, delayed play for half an hour. Finishing as dusk fell, Sorenstam missed a short putt on No. 18. *AP*

Reigning Asian champ headlines karting bill

THE CONTINENT'S TOP KARTERS put their driving skills to the test as they compete in the 2006 Shell Helix Superkarting series on Mar. 18 and 19 at the Carmona Circuit Philippines in Bangkal, Cavite.

Reigning Asian kart champ Michele Bumgarner headlines the starting list as she guns for a back-to-back crown this season.

Other karters will drive for titles in eight divisions: Cadet 60 Novice, Mini ROK, ROK Junior Cup, ROK Senior Cup, Formula SL, Rotax Max Challenge Seniors, Rotax Max Challenge Novice and the Formula 125 Open.

Bumgarner launches her drive for the title against a tough field that includes big-named karters such as Marlon Stockinger, Ivan Carapiet and Indy Villalon, Bosch Intelco's Marty Aguilar, Maico Angeles and Paolo Eslao, who clinched last year's Formula SL and the Novice Karter of the Year trophies.

There will be a new innovation in this event sponsored by Pilipinas Shell Helix, Denso Iridium Power, Honda Phils., Eastway Company and Aeromed Ambulance Transport and Yokohama Kart Tires—the official tires of the tournament.

If the new track design was a big challenge last year, karters will also have to familiarize themselves with the newly-introduced ROK engines.

"These karters have grown familiar with the track as well as each other's driving skills," said Carmona Circuit Philippines Manager Lot M. Tan. "But the introduction of ROK engines will surely add a new spice in this series, making the race more challenging and exciting."

Young karting kids are expected to shine brighter following their impressive performances last year.

Among the young drivers to watch are Cebu Racing Group's John Alvarez, Javi Benitez, Tomas Cabili, Juha Turalba, Ayrton Cuesta, Roman Academia and Paco Rodriguez for the Junior ROK Cup and Vencer Suba, Paolo Gonzales, Franco Reyes, Joey Orduña and Jet Calderon for the Mini ROK Cup.

Other races will be staged at the Boomland at the CCP on Jul. 8 and 9; Batangas Racing Circuit on Apr. 29 and 30; Cebu Kart Trak on Sept. 9 and 10, and Enchanted Kingdom on Aug. 12 and 13.

The championship will be held on Nov. 11 and 12, at the Carmona Circuit Phils.

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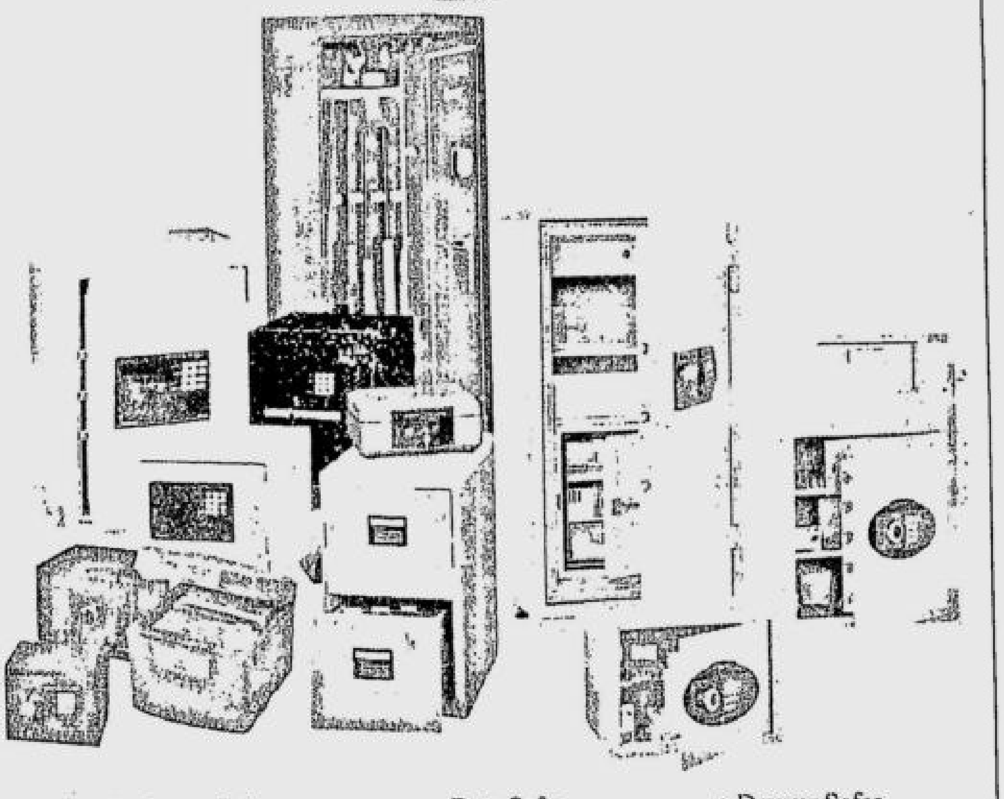

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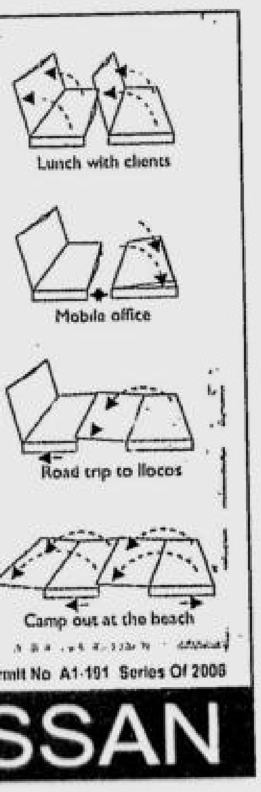

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NISSAN

Tour Pilipinas renews partnership with GAB

THE GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS BOARD remains a major partner of the Tour Pilipinas, the annual cycling classic which will run its Padyak Pinoy edition from April 20 to 30.

The Tour Pilipinas's partnership with the GAB is akin to its ties with the Integrated Cycling Federation of the Philippines or PhilCycling, the national federation for the sport that is sanctioning the summer spectacle.

GAB chair Eric Buhain, the former swimming sensation, views the annual Tour as a major vehicle for cyclists to earn financial rewards and, more importantly, reap national and international recognition.

"More competitions mean more chances for financial rewards and recognition for our cyclists," said Buhain, who, before being named GAB chief, was chair of the Philippine Sports Commission.

Inquiries about the Tour Pilipinas 2006-Padyak Pinoy can be obtained through hotline 459-2125, telephone 793-2175 and email address padyakpinoy@tourpilipinas.com or through the website www.tourpilipinas.com.

All 80 cyclists, including defending champion Warren Davadilla and race officials and commissaries and Dynamic Outsource Solutions Inc. (Dos-1) president Gary Cayton, the race organizer, are licensed by the GAB.

The riders will be divided into 10 teams of eight in the 10-stage, 11-day Tour that offers more than P4 million in cash prizes covers more than 1,700 kilometers of roads in Luzon.

The summer race will feature two crucial stages in Tagaytay City—a massed start stage that includes a treacherous climb along Sungay from Talisay to the picturesque city overlooking Taal Volcano and an individual time trial stage that traces the route used in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

DEFENDING champion Warren Davadilla

Asian Tour big boost to women's billiards

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

OUR EXCLUSIVE REPORT ON the Philippines' hosting the first ever Asian Ladies 9-Ball Tournament here (PDI, 2/10/06) has been confirmed by no less than the country's foremost woman billiards player, Rubilen Amit, winner of two gold medals in last year's Southeast Asian Games.

"It's official," confirmed the 24-year-old Amit, saying she learned about the good news from billiards "godfather" Aristeo "Putch" Puyat himself. "I'm very happy because this tournament, set for April 26-28, will be a big help to our women players who need international exposure," added Amit, who will be seeing action together with another nationally ranked player, Iris Rañola, in the cash-rich Japan 9-Ball Open in Tokyo March 17-18. Their Japanese trip will be bankrolled by Puyat and the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines headed by Ernie Fajardo.1

Early this month, Amit took part in the World Pool Championship in Taipei where she narrowly lost in the Round of 24 to Sweden's Charlotte Sorensen, 7-6. The sensational Kim Gayoung of South Korea emerged champion as predicted. She is expected to strut her stuff in the Asian Ladies 9-Ball Tour.

Although virtually unknown to many Filipinos, the 20-year-old Kim is highly regarded by American pool aficionados after she won both the last US Ladies Open and the American Ladies Invitational titles. In making her presence felt in the US, the Korean champion won over touted players like Alison Fisher and Karen Corr, whose string of upset victories included wins over male players like Earl "The Pearl" Strickland and Johnny "The Scorpion" Archer of the US and Ralf "The Kaiser" Souquet of Germany, three former world champions who are all familiar to Filipino fans.

On the coming Japan 9-Ball Open, Efren "Bata" Reyes said he would try his best to retain the championship he won last year at the expense of countryman Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat. Team manager Rolly Vicente added he was keeping his fingers crossed that the Philippine delegation, composed of Reyes, Francisco "Django" Bustamante, Amit and Rañola, would perform creditably.

Following a successful laser treatment to correct his eyesight, the 51-year-old Reyes will now be gunning for his third major triumph this year in the Japan Open. He had earlier won the $200,000 IPT (International Pool Tour) winner-take-all tournament and the One-Pocket championship of the Derby City Classic, both in the US.

While women's billiards is not yet in vogue in the Philippines, the Asian Ladies 9-Ball Tour could very well serve as a breakthrough for the sport. The Manila leg is envisioned to kick off the proposed five-leg Asian Ladies Tour, similar to the yearly Asian Tour for men. The ladies tour will be sanctioned by the Asian Confederation of Billiards Sports and will be held in Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore.

Aimed at promoting billiards among women and prepare the lady players for this year's Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, on Dec. 1-15, the Asian Ladies Tour was conceived during a meeting of SEA Games delegation heads in Manila. Officials of ESPN-Star Sports are keen on airing the Asian Ladies Tour in their network that covers 39 countries and with an audience of half a billion viewers.

There will be 16 slots available in each leg, with the host country given two slots each for a total of 10. In the allocation of the six other available slots, Southeast Asian countries interested to join the Tour would be given preference, otherwise the said slots will be offered to other Asian countries like China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan, which have world-class players. The double elimination matches will be a race to seven racks, alternate break, to give all players maximum exposure and playing time. The semifinals and finals will be race to nine, alternate break.

Reyes, also called "The Magician" in pool circles, elevated billiards to its present position of respect and recognition in the country when he won the prestigious US Open in 1994 and the World Pool 9-Ball Championship in Cardiff, Wales, in 1999. The billiards boom in the Philippines started in the early eighties when ageless Jose "Amang" Parica, now based in the US, Reyes and Bustamante dominated the lucrative American circuit. In 2004, Canada-based Alex "The Lion" Pagulayan won the World Pool Championship in Taiwan to continue the fine tradition, with Marlon Manalo and Dennis Orcollo, among others, now waiting in the wings to prove their worth.

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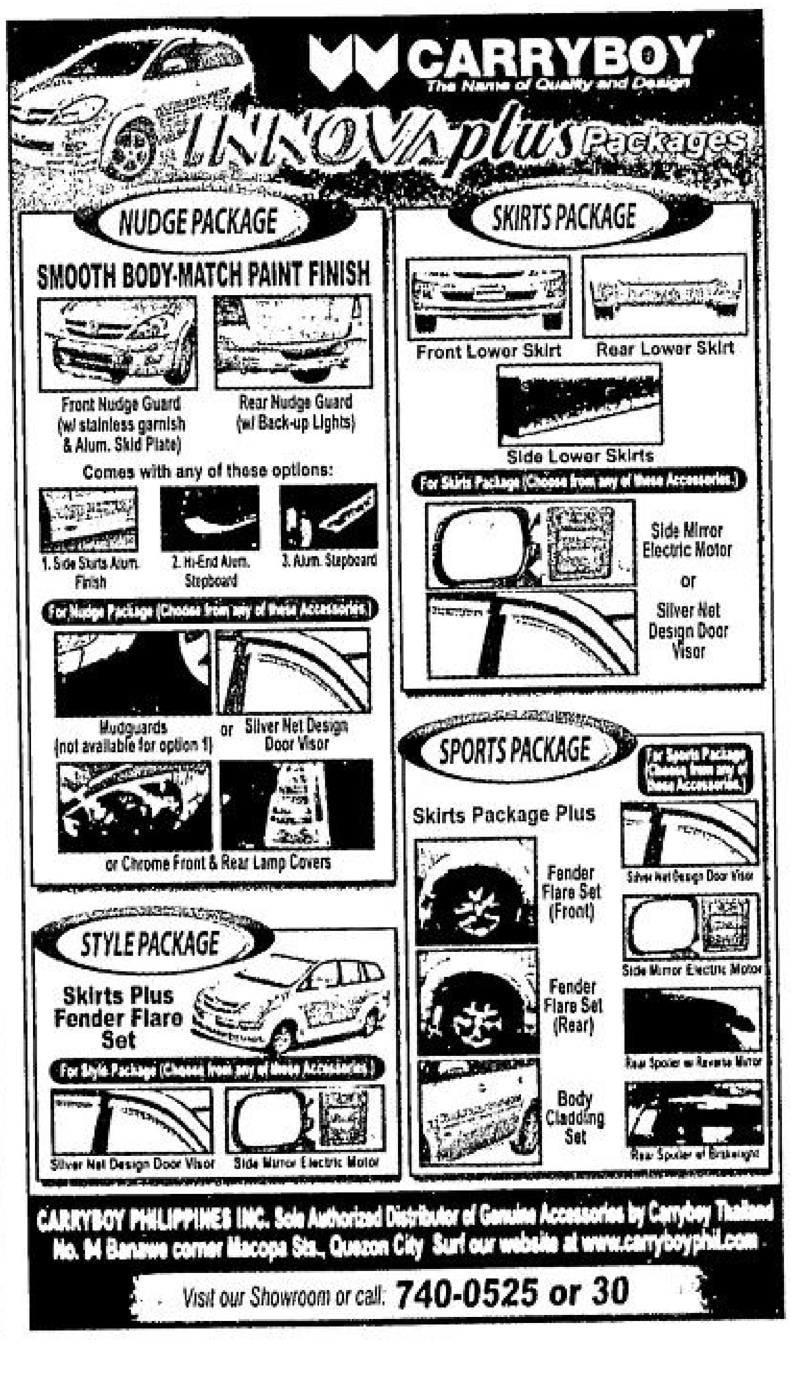
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MMFF goes for P.5B

By Nini Valera

HALF A BILLION.

This is the target income of the 2006 Metro Manila Film Festival, which was launched last Friday at the Wack Wack Golf & Country Club.

The festival is traditionally held during the yearend holidays.

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando, MMFF overall chair, said he was confident of hitting the target.

"Last year, the festival recorded its biggest income ever (in 30 years)," Fernando said in his speech, delivered in Filipino. "We want to beat that this year, and I say, half a billion pesos."

Optimistic

The 2005 MMFF made P351.9 million in gross receipts.

Fernando said he could reach the new target with the help of media even as he acknowledged the participation of the Kapisanan ng mga Broadkaster ng Pilipinas for the past three years.

In an interview with INQUIRER Entertainment also on Friday, Fernando admitted that intrigues, a constant every festival season, have been helping create interest among viewers.

"We need the intrigues," he said. "We need people to talk about the entries."

Last year, Wilson Tieng, a member of the board of jurors, was accused by one of the producers, Regal Entertainment's Lily Monteverde, of campaigning for "Kutob," its lead star Marvin Agustin and director Joey Reyes to win Best Actor and Best Director by giving a forecast of winners to INQUIRER.

Agustin and Reyes did win, and Regal's "Blue Moon" took the Best Picture Award.

MMFF/ A2-2

Ako Legal Wife

ZSAZSA Padilla happy to get her "incentive." Story below.
JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Cash, cash!

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

GUEST PERFORMER Rachel Alejandro described it as "a night of winners."

Stars and industry leaders gathered at the Wack Wack Country Club for the awarding of the 2005 Metro Manila Film Festival cash prizes.

The cash "incentives" were awarded, said lawyer Espiridion Laxa, "to encourage producers, artists and technicians to excel."

Subsidy

Laxa, chair of the festival rules and legal affairs committee, told INQUIRER Entertainment that P750,000 each was given to the festival's 10 producers—bringing to a total of P1.75 million the subsidy for last year's entries. During the awards night last January, President Macapagal-Arroyo awarded producers P1 million each.

On top of the subsidy, the Best Picture winner, "Blue Moon," also received P850,000; Second Best Picture, "Exodus," P500,000; Third Best Picture, "Kutob," P300,000; and the Gatpuno Villegas Cultural Award winner, "Kutob," P500,000.

Best Actor (Marvin

CASH/ A2-2

Cindy Kurleto
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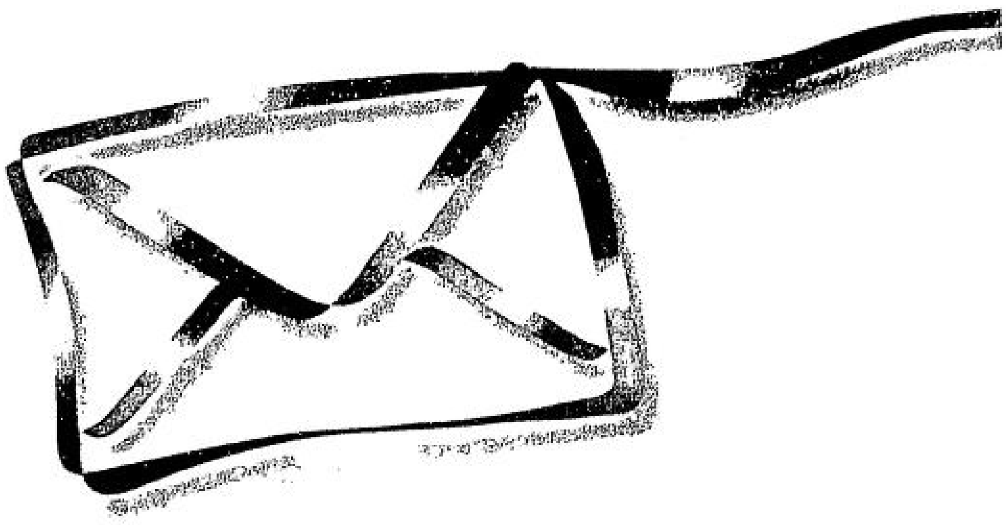

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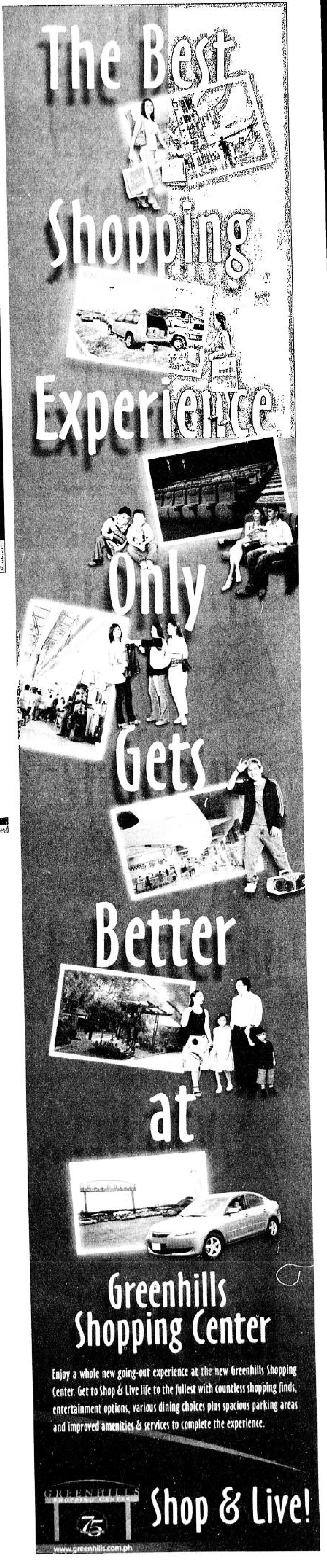

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MMFF goes for ₱.5B

From page A2-1

Fernando has shrugged off the love-hate relationship between Monteverde and the MMFF that has persisted throughout the years.

"After she gets over her disappointments, her love for the industry would again resurface," he said.

Consistent

Fernando acknowledged Monteverde's consistent presence in the festival, saying that without her, there might be no MMFF.

"No other producer is as eager to submit entries," Fernando said.

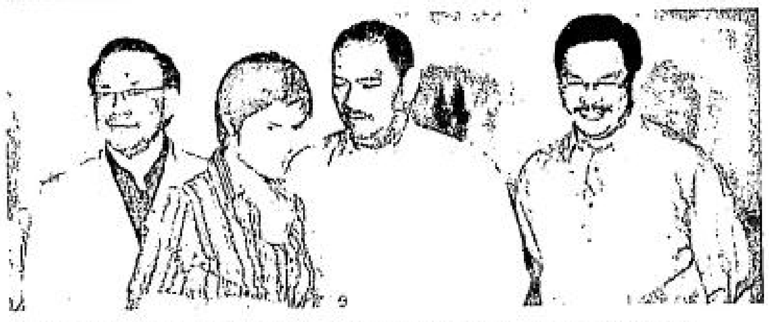
Asked why he allowed the submission of rushes of "Blue Moon" instead of the finished product during the final selection of entries in the finished product category, Fernando said no other entry could take its place.

Old rule

Last year, organizers introduced the finished product category, which required filmmakers to submit canned movies for consideration as entries. These would be shown in the festival's second half, which starts Jan. 1.

AT THE launch/awarding ceremony: **MMDA chair Bayani Fernando, Best Supporting Actress Cherry Pie Picache, Regal producer Roselle Monteverde-Teo and lawyer Espiridion Laxa, chair of rules committee.**

PHOTOS BY JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN



WILSON Tieng, promotions committee chair; Undersecretary Robert C. Nacianceno, festival executive director; Ric Camaligan, provincial parade committee chair; and Mariz Ricketts, producer.

But Fernando said the MMFF was reverting to its old regulation of requiring a script as basis for entry selection. Likewise, he added, there would be new faces in the board of jurors.

Among Monteverde's complaints is the lack of new blood among the judges.

"We can not really make everybody happy," Fernando said.

Happy Zsazsa

Zsazsa Padilla, last year's Best Actress, looked happy at Friday's event. She said she had come to claim her cash incentive for winning.

"We need this kind of incentive to continue doing good work," she said, unabashed.

A total of P11.6 million in cash were awarded to the festival winners and producers *(See related story on A2-1.)*.

Fernando announced that the deadline for submission of entries to this year's festival is April 30.

Cash, cash!

From page A2-1

Agustin for "Kutob), Actress (Zsazsa Padilla, "Ako Legal Wife"), Director (Jose Javier Reyes, "Kutob") and Screenplay ("Blue Moon") received P100,000 each.

Best Supporting Actor (Jose Manalo, "Enteng Kabisote 2"), Supporting Actress (Cherry Pie Picache, "Ako Legal Wife), and the rest of the awardees got P50,000 each.

All of the major awardees were present.

Best Float winners—"Exodus," "Mulawin" and "Blue Moon"—were also given cash prizes.

Laxa disclosed that MMFF officers had doubled the cash incentives from last year's. "It's only fitting because the last festival was the most successful in 30 years," he said. "During its 14-day run, it earned P351,935,000."

SM big boss Henry Sy was conferred a Lifetime Achievement award.

FOR Marvin Agustin, best actor, P100,000. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

In his speech, Ric Camaligan, chair of the provincial parade committee, sounded a "call for unity" in light of myriad controversies plaguing the MMFF—namely, disagreements over awards and reallocation of funds.

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GP

3 16 BLOCKS
1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00
PG-13

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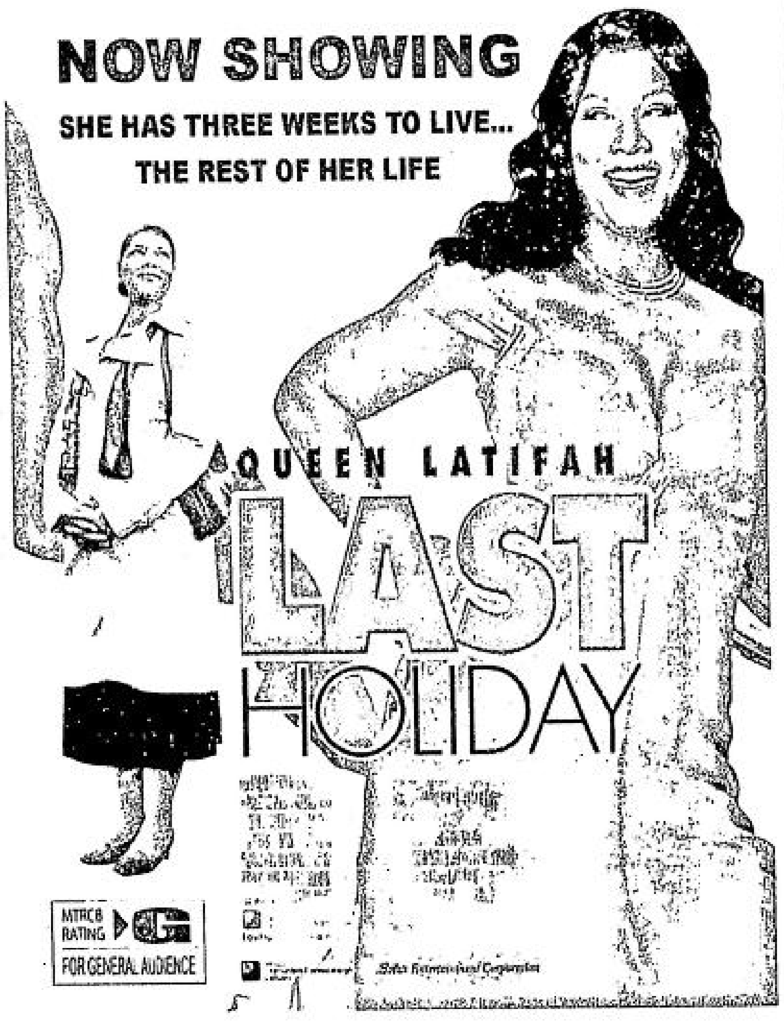

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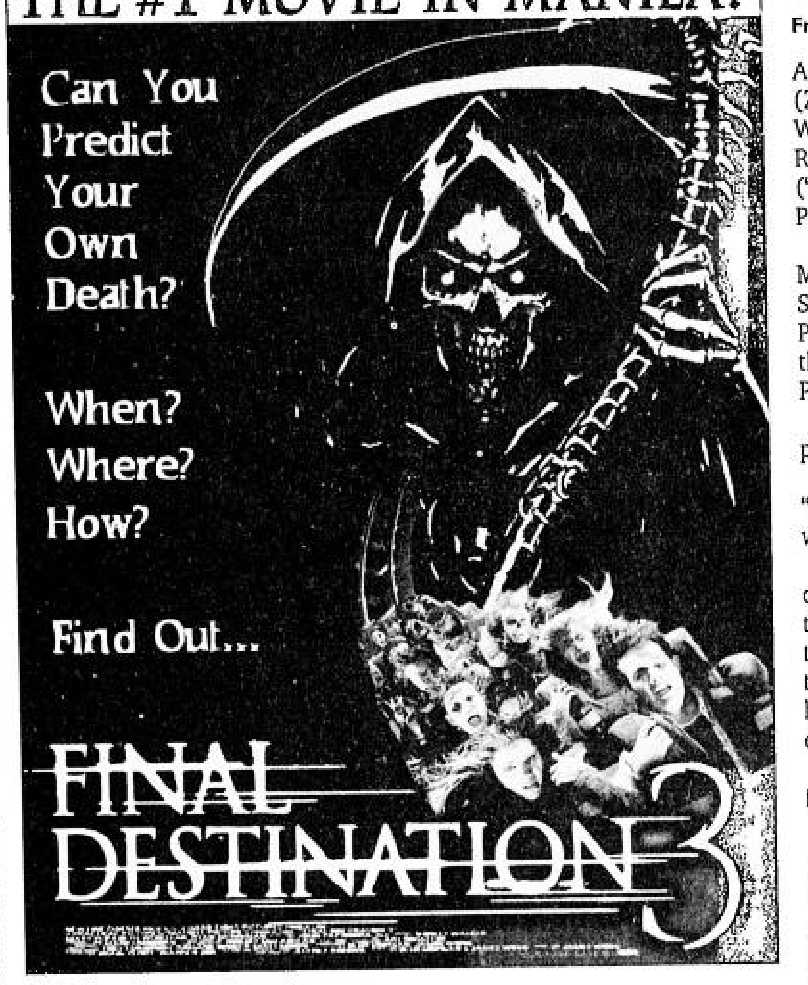

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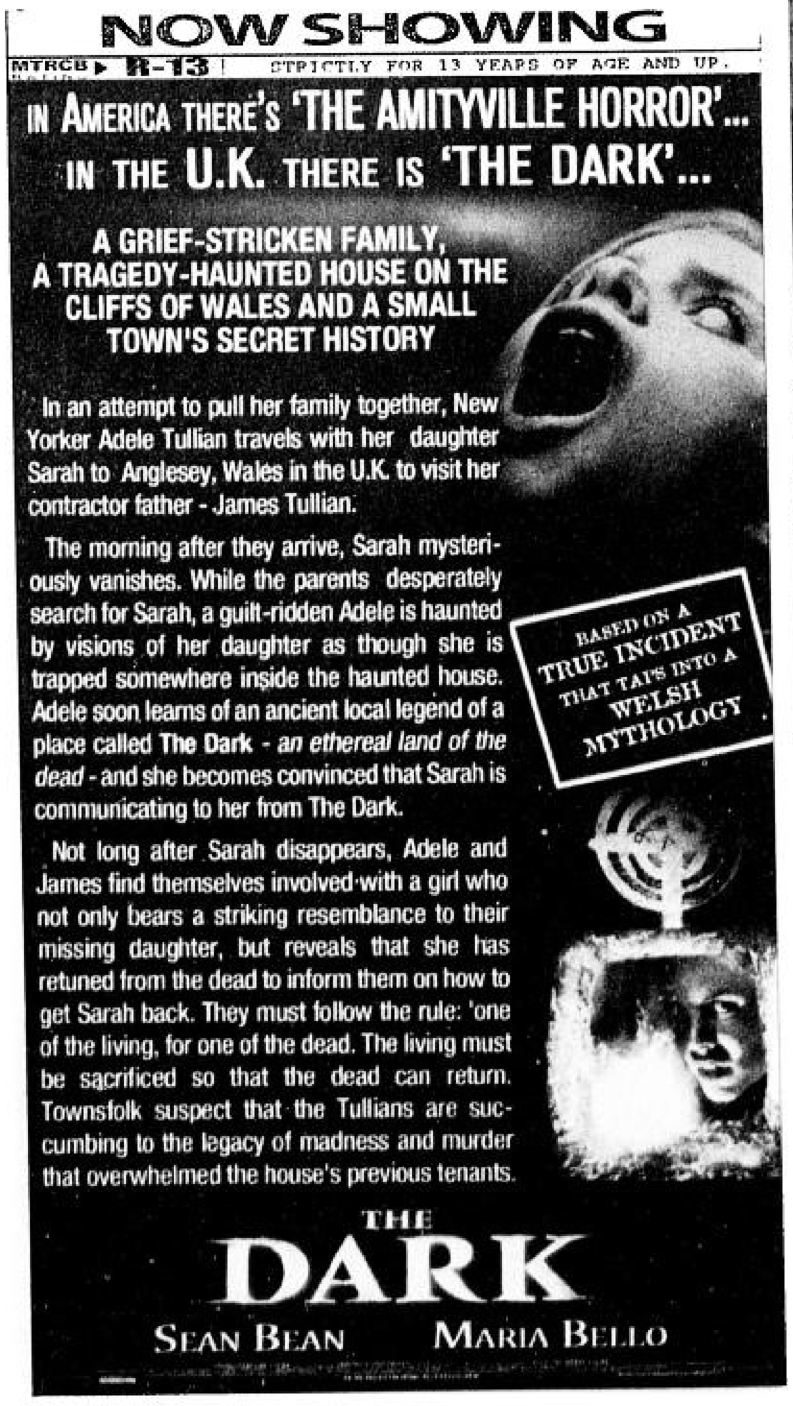

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The morning after they arrive, Sarah mysteriously vanishes. While the parents desperately search for Sarah, a guilt-ridden Adele is haunted by visions of her daughter as though she is trapped somewhere inside the haunted house. Adele soon learns of an ancient local legend of a place called **The Dark** - *an ethereal land of the dead* - and she becomes convinced that Sarah is communicating to her from The Dark.

Not long after Sarah disappears, Adele and James find themselves involved with a girl who not only bears a striking resemblance to their missing daughter, but reveals that she has retuned from the dead to inform them on how to get Sarah back. They must follow the rule: 'one of the living, for one of the dead. The living must be sacrificed so that the dead can return. Townsfolk suspect that the Tullians are succumbing to the legacy of madness and murder that overwhelmed the house's previous tenants.

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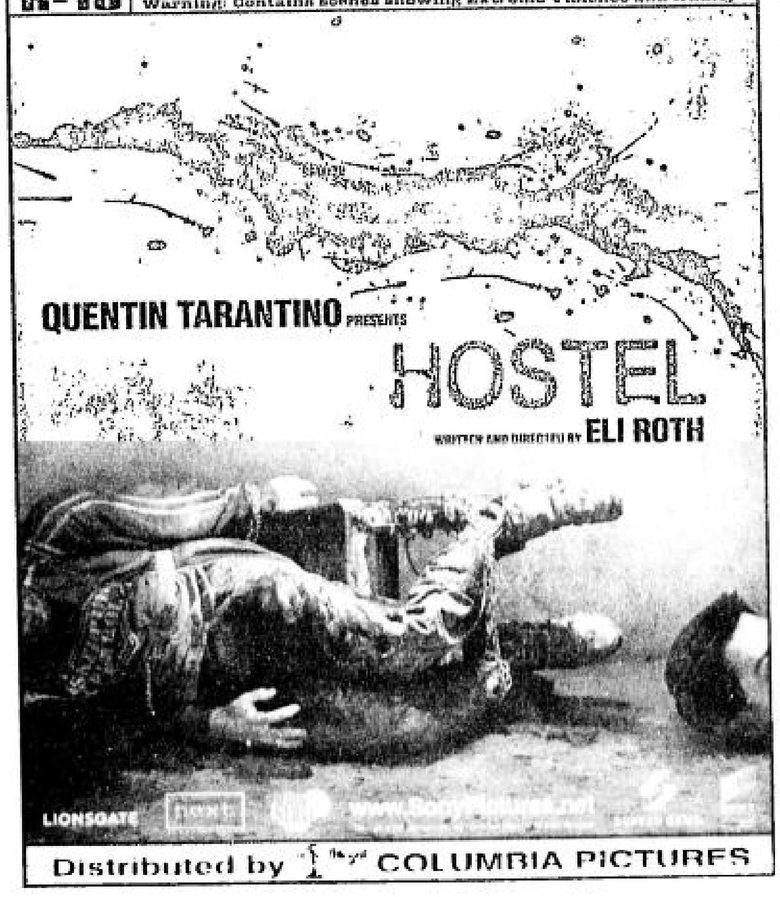

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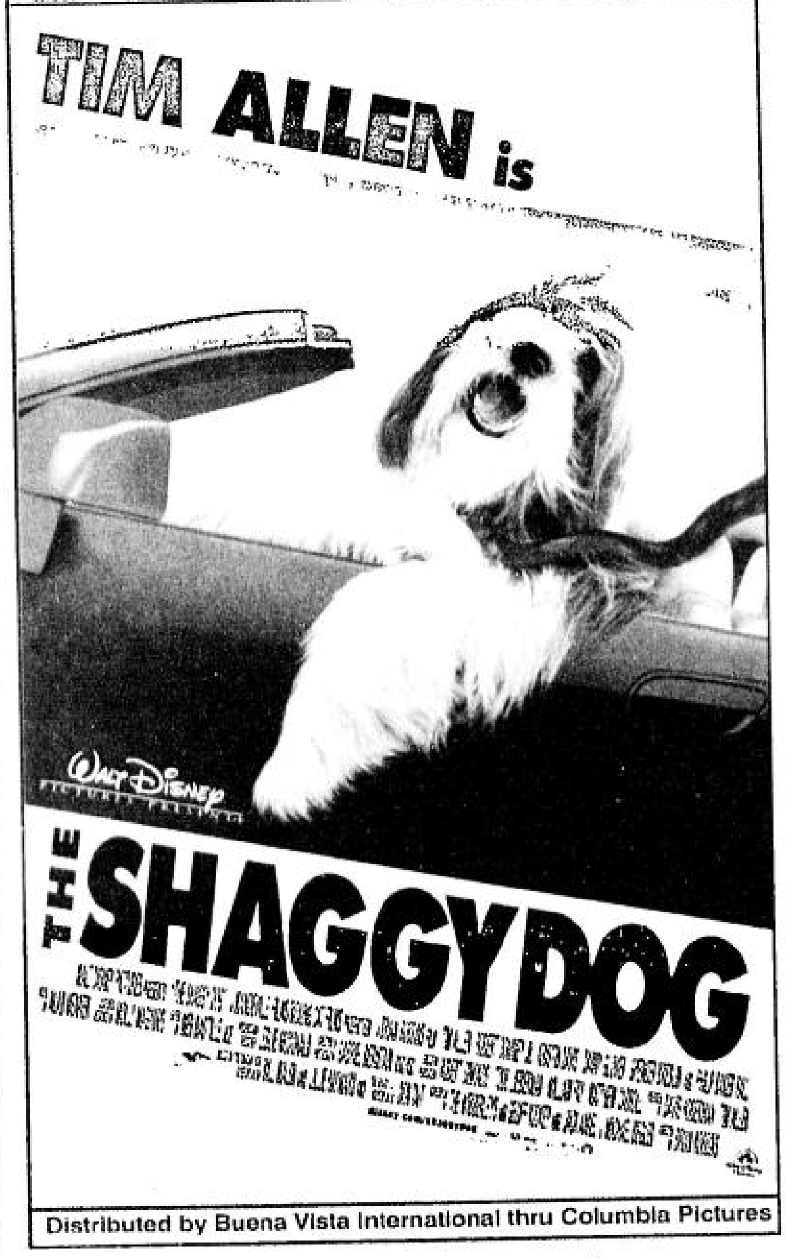

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Michael Jackson's Neverland closed; workers unpaid

LOS ANGELES—CALIFORNIA authorities have closed pop star Michael Jackson's Neverland ranch after workers complained they have not been paid since December.

Jackson has been ordered to pay almost $170,000 in fines for failure to pay wages and cover staff insurance, officials said.

The action has renewed speculation about Jackson's finances.

California state labor officials went to the ranch, near Santa Barbara, on Thursday and told staff there to stop working.

Thirty Neverland employees earlier complained they had not been paid since December, according to a Division of Labor Standards Enforcement report. A total of 69 workers have not been paid or had insurance contributions made for them.

Fines

The California Department of Industrial Relations on Tuesday ordered Jackson to pay more than $300,000 in back wages and imposed a $100,000 fine.

Jackson has been fined another $69,000 for the failure to pay insurance — $1,000 for each worker.

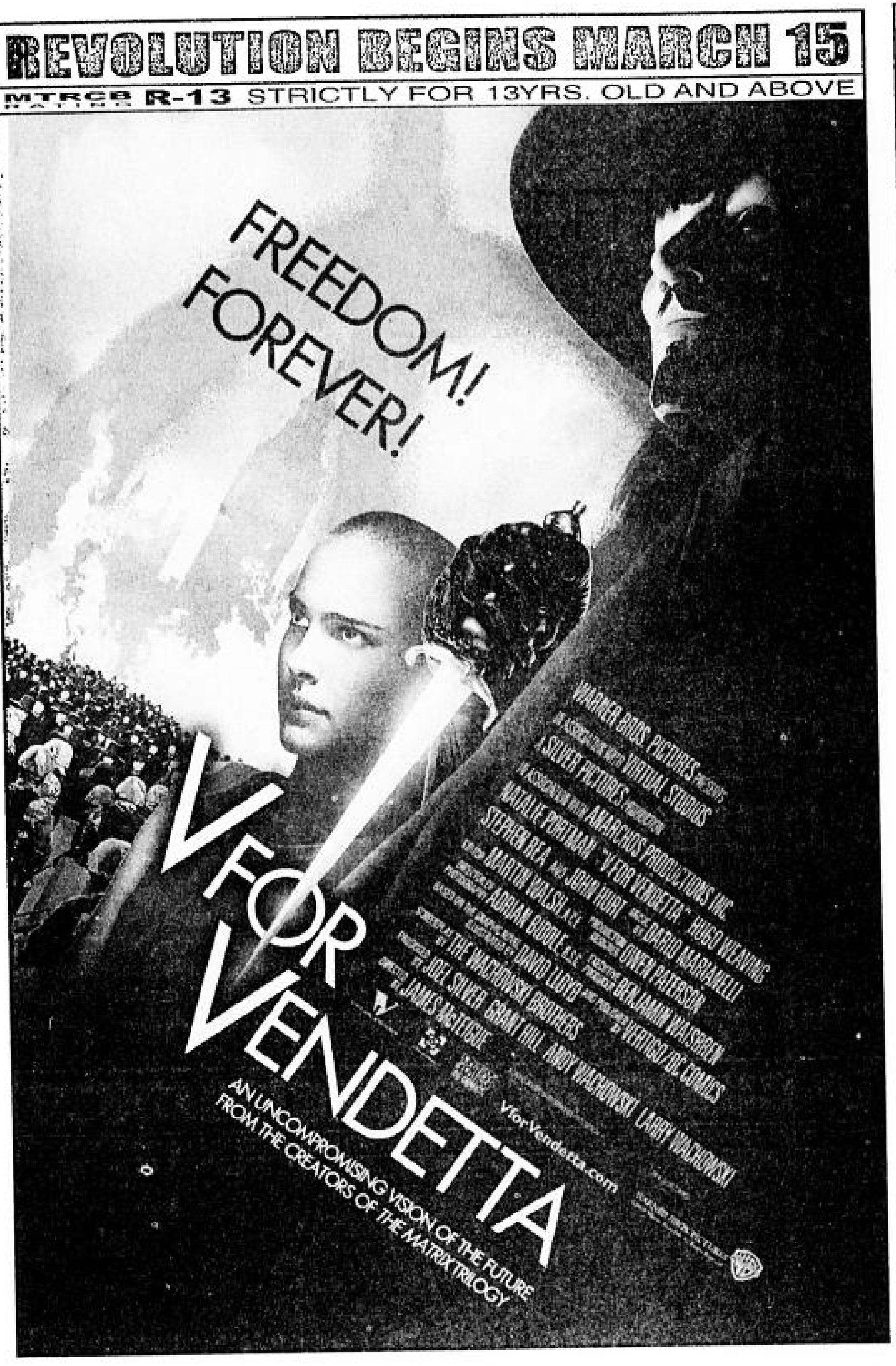
Dean Fryer, a spokesperson for the California Department of Industrial Relations, said Jackson's representatives had been working closely with the department.

"He cannot operate with employees without workers' compensations... he has to comply by March 14. If he doesn't, we'll file a lawsuit in civil court," Fryer said.

The 47-year-old former pop superstar has spent most of his time in Bahrain since he was acquitted in June on sexual molestation charges by a California jury.

His Washington-based spokesperson, Raymone Bain, said: "In matters of his personal finances and his children, he (Jackson) has not really issued statements. I'm not sure that's going to change. What I can say is that he's not in LA. He's in Bahrain." In December, The Los Angeles Times reported that Jackson was in negotiation with creditors to extend a loan so that he would not have to sell Neverland Valley ranch and his stake in the Beatles catalogue.

AFP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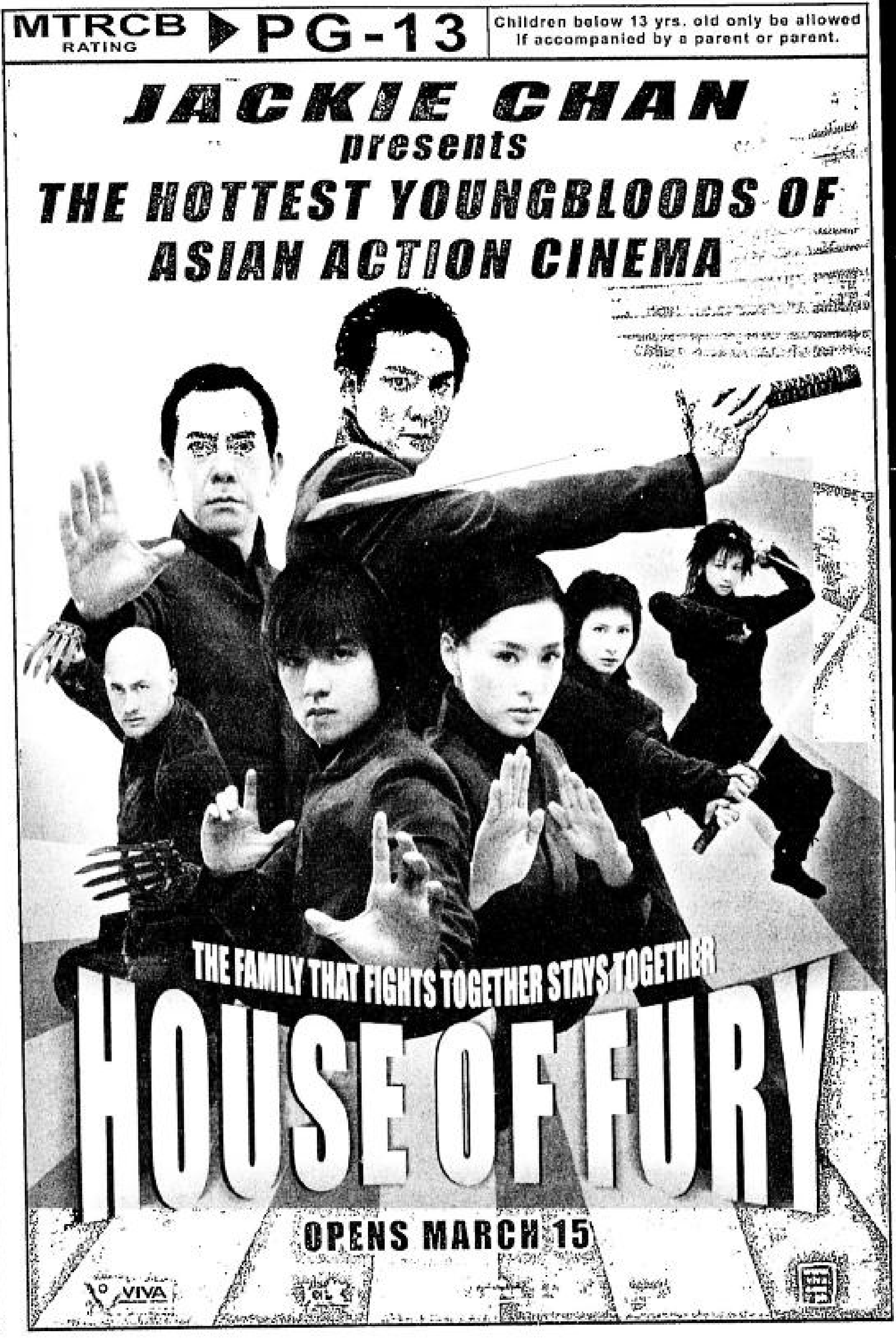
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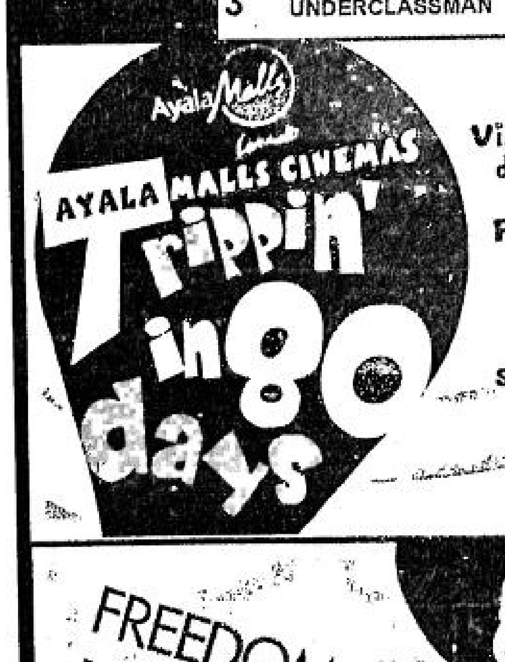
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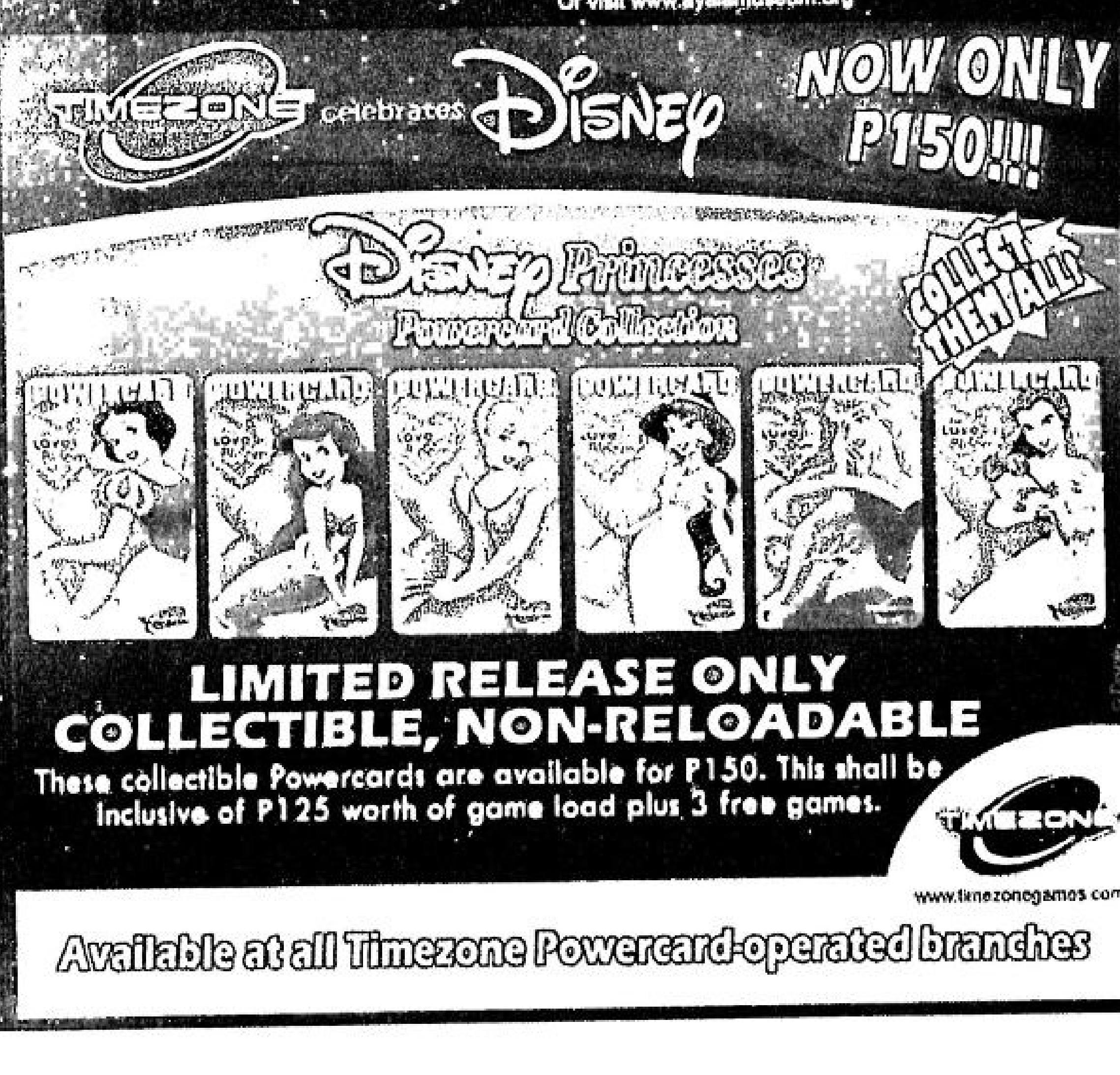
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METRO MANILA

THE PODIUM

16 BLOCKS
01:20 FS / 01:50 MF / 04:10
06:30 / 08:20 LFS
09:00 LMF / 10:45 END

YOURS, MINE & OURS
02:30 FS / 03:00 MF / 05:00
07:00 / 08:30 LFS
09:00 LMF / 10:30 END

SM MEGACINEMA

BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
12:00FS / 12:20 MF
02:25 / 04:05LFS /
04:30 LMF / 06:10 END
YOURS, MINE & OURS
16 BLOCKS
RESERVED
THE DARK
CASANOVA
LAST HOLIDAY
UNDERCLASS MAN
FEARLESS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
TIGER BLADE
CLOSE TO YOU

SM CITY NORTH EDSA

CASANOVA
16 BLOCKS
THE DARK
RESERVED
LAST HOLIDAY/ CLOSE TO YOU
YOURS, MINE & OURS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
FEARLESS

SM CITY DASMARINAS

FEARLESS
16 BLOCKS
YOURS, MINE & OURS
SYRIANA

SM CITY FAIRVIEW

LAST HOLIDAY
MEMOIRS OF GEISHA
YOURS, MINE & OURS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
FEARLESS
UNDERCLASS MAN
16 BLOCKS
CLOSE TO YOU
THE DARK
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU
AEON FLUX

SM CITY STA. MESA

16 BLOCKS
THE DARK
CASANOVA
FINAL DESTINATION 3
FEARLESS
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
YOURS, MINE & OURS
LAST HOLIDAY
CLOSE TO YOU
UNDERCLASS MAN

SM CITY BICUTAN

16 BLOCKS
UNDERCLASS MAN
YOURS, MINE & OURS
FEARLESS

SM CITY SAN LAZARO

16 BLOCKS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
THE DARK
FEARLESS/CLOSE TO YOU
CASANOVA
YOURS, MINE & OURS

SM CITY MANILA

16 BLOCKS
CASANOVA
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
FINAL DESTINATION 3
YOURS, MINE & OURS
FEARLESS
UNDERCLASS MAN
LAST HOLIDAY/
MEMOIRS OF GEISHA
CLOSE TO YOU
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
THE DARK
TIGER BLADE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL

16 BLOCKS
CLOSE TO YOU
FEARLESS
CASANOVA
LAST HOLIDAY
UNDERCLASS MAN
YOURS, MINE & OURS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
THE DARK
RESERVED

SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA

FINAL DESTINATION 3
FEARLESS
YOURS, MINE & OURS
CLOSE TO YOU

SM CITY SUCAT

YOURS, MINE & OURS
FEARLESS
16 BLOCKS
CLOSE TO YOU

Now Showing at SM Cinemas

CASANOVA

Meet Heath Ledger as the legendary seducer, swashbuckler, explorer and adventurer Mr. Giacomo Casanova and watch how he is challenged by Sienna Miller as the charming Francesca Bruni

MTRCB Rating R-13
Only aged 13 and above will be admitted

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SM CITY BAGUIO

FIREWALL
AEON FLUX
FEARLESS
YOURS, MINE & OURS

SM CITY MARILAO

BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
FEARLESS
CLOSE TO YOU
UNDERCLASS MAN

SM CITY BATANGAS

PINK PANTHER
CLOSE TO YOU
BLOODRAYNE
MUNICH

LUZON

SM CITY BACOOR

UNDERCLASS MAN
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
16 BLOCKS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
FEARLESS
CLOSE TO YOU
THE DARK
YOURS, MINE & OURS

SM CITY STA. ROSA

CLOSE TO YOU
YOURS, MINE & OURS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
FEARLESS

SM CITY PAMPANGA

FEARLESS
YOURS, MINE & OURS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
WALK THE LINE
CLOSE TO YOU

SM CITY LUCENA

PINK PANTHER
CLOSE TO YOU
UNDERWORLD
NEW WORLD

SM CITY MOLINO

FINAL DESTINATION 3
FEARLESS
UNDERCLASS MAN
16 BLOCKS

SM CITY CEBU

MEMOIRS OF GEISHA
11:30FS / 02:00 / 04.30
07:00 / 09:24 LFS
09:30 LMF / 11:50 END
FEARLESS
11:20FS / 11:30 MF
01:30 / 03:30 / 05:30
07:30 / 09.15 LFS /
09:30 LMF / 11:15 END
16 BLOCKS
11.20FS / 11:30 MF
01:30 / 03:30 / 05:30
7:30 / 09:15 LFS
09:30 LMF / 11:15 END
YOURS, MINE & OURS
ST. ANGE
NASAAN SI FRANCIS
CLOSE TO YOU
AEON FLUX

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY ILOILO

YOURS, MINE & OUR
RESERVED
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
FEARLESS
CLOSE TO YOU
NEW WORLD
RESERVED
MEMOIRS OF GEISHA

SM CITY DAVAO

FIREWALL
CRASH
CLOSE TO YOU
FEARLESS
YOURS, MINE & OURS
AEON FLUX

SM CITY CAGAYAN

WALK THE LINE
FEARLESS
AEON FLUX
FIREWALL

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EXCLUSIVE
Come and visit the
FEARLESS
霍元甲
EXHIBIT
Actual props and costumes used in the movie are now on display at
SM City Manila Cinema lobby
From February 22 to March 14

FROM THE PRODUCER OF "HERO"

STRENGTH
HONOR
COURAGE
FEARLESS
NOW SHOWING

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MOVIE LISTING, MTRCB RATING, SCREENINGS [illegible]

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

**CINEMA ACCESS
635-5555
FOR ALL BRANCHES**

www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

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GALLERIA 632-8116

1 CASANOVA• THX
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

2 DATE MOVIE
11:15 1:20 3:25 5:30 7:35 9:45

3 16 BLOCKS
12.30 2.50 5:10 7:30 9:50

4 KEYS TO THE HOUSE
12:40 3:00 5.20 7.40 10.00

5 LAST HOLIDAY
12.00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10.00

6 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
11:15 1:20 3:25 5.30 7.35 9:45

7 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
1.30 4:20 7:10 10.00

8 UNDERCLASS MAN
1.00 3.10 5.20 7.30 9.40

9 THE DARK
1:10 3.20 5.30 7:40 9.50

10 FEARLESS
12:30 2.50 5.10 7:30 9:50

ERMITA 636-7809 to 12

1 16 BLOCKS
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9.50

2 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
12.00 2.00 4.00 6.00 8.00 9.50

3 UNDERCLASS MAN
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8.00 10.00

4 THE DARK
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9.50

5 LAST HOLIDAY
12.00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

6 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
12:30 2.50 5.10 7:30 9.50

7 FEARLESS
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 LAST HOLIDAY
1:05 3:45 6:25 9:05

2 CASANOVA
12:15 2:25 4:35 6:45 9:00

3 DATE MOVIE
11:00 1:00 3:05 5:10 7:15 9:15

4 UNDERCLASS MAN
12:40 2:45 4:50 6:55 9:00

5 FEARLESS
12.15 2:25 4:35 6:45 9:00

6 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
11:45 2:05 4:25 6:45 9:05

7 16 BLOCKS
11:05 1:35 4:05 6:35 9:05

8 THE DARK
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
2 DATE MOVIE
3 CASANOVA
4 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
5 16 BLOCKS
6 UNDERCLASS MAN

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2576

1 BLOODRAYNE
2 DATE MOVIE
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

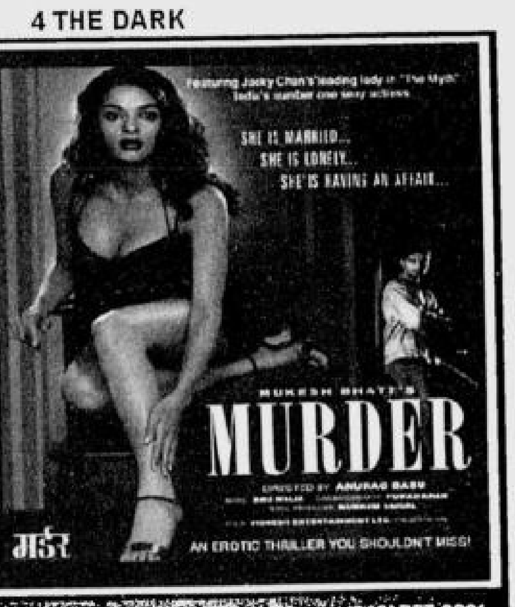
1 16 BLOCKS
2 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
3 DATE MOVIE
4 THE DARK

exclusive
SCREENING
Robinsons Movieworld
STA. ROSA and ILOILO

Sudhir and Simran are a happy couple settled in Bangkok. Engineer and chasing his dreams Sudhir ignores his wife. In an alien land and novel atmosphere Simran gets longs to pursue new horizons. At this juncture she meets an old buddy Sunny. Their loneliness brings them together and ignites a passion blinded by desire. Subsequently they cross all boundaries. Soon they get obsessed and addicted to each other and Simran's adulterous affair begins to show off. Infuriated by the deteriorating state of his marriage, Sudhir confronts Sunny. And this very meeting leads to devastating results for them all.

starting
MARCH 08
MTRCB Rating: R-18

For SCREENING SCHEDULES, pls. call our CINEMA ACCESS 635-5555 or visit us at www.robinsonsmovieworld.com



SHE IS MARRIED...
SHE IS LONELY...
SHE'S HAVING AN AFFAIR...
MUKESH BHATT'S
MURDER
DIRECTED BY ANURAG BASU
AN EROTIC THRILLER YOU SHOULDN'T MISS!

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 FINAL DESTINATION 3
2 MURDER
3 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
4 DATE MOVIE
5 FEARLESS

LIPA (043) 757-3864 (043) 312-5870

1 FEARLESS
2 NASAAN SI FRANCIS
3 PINK PANTHER
4 NEW WORLD

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4392

1 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
2 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
3 SYRIANA
4 NASAAN SI FRANCIS?
5 16 BLOCKS

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 BLOODRAYNE
2 DATE MOVIE
3 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
4 YOURS, MINE AND OURS

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 434-8188

1 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
2 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
3 DATE MOVIE
4 16 BLOCKS

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

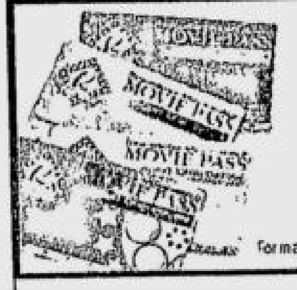
1 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
2 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
3 DATE MOVIE
4 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
5 FEARLESS
6 FINAL DESTINATION 3

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459

1 AEON FLUX
2 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
3 UNDERWORLD 2
4 FEARLESS
5 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
6 NASAAN SI FRANCIS?

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 FEARLESS
2 NASAAN SI FRANCIS?
3 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
4 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
5 MURDER
6 NEW WORLD



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Te

MOST TALENT AND STAR SEARCHes on TV pick their winners with a l of help from the viewers' text-vot This is deemed to be a good thin because the public is supposed to the best arbiter of star value. Aft all, fans are the ones who'll be bu ing the new stars' records or watc ing their movies in the years come—or not.

Trouble is, it's turning out that t public isn't a reliable scout for r talent. A discouraging number of t ent tilt winners are bombing at t box office or the music charts, a that's really off-putting, because contradicts what talent tilts are su posed to achieve: discover new t ents and get their careers off to good start.

All too often, however, this is happening, because televiewe have simply been making the wro choices in terms of talent and pote tially enduring star appeals.

This becomes more ironic when show's official jurors make the rig decisions, but the text votes sho down their well-considered choic Why have jurors on board in the fi place, if their better-informed sel tions are ignored by viewer-voters

The best way to see how relial text votes are is to wait a year afte talent search ends, and track how the winners have gotten in th show biz careers.

Most of the time, they end up has-beens even before they've do much of anything! So, why hold t

Musical ca

FIVE BACKROOM, INC. artists are set to perform around the country in a summer musical caravan.

Kyla, Frenchie Dy, K Brosas and the Boxers, Kim Flores and Erik Santos pool their talents for the trek: Pagcor Grand Theater Parañaque on March 31; Ynarez Gymnasium in Antipolo, April 28; Pampanga, April 29; Del Rio Resort in General Santos, May 12; South Koronadal Gymnasium in General Santos, on May 13; La Salle Bacolod, May

SHOW TIME

Squ
D
Meri

Mar
M
Soul
Squ
Ei
Bar

Unrealistic

From Edwin Sison (joma_sison@yahoo.com), 27 Lipton Street, Quezon City:

Evicted and yet ecstatic? *Kaplastikan na 'yan.* Too much blah-blah about missing his kids and life being too short. Oh well, send for the kids! And, whether you are in or out of that "Pinoy Big Brother" house, life will not get any longer. Christian Vasquez, I do not know him, and I'm not much of a fan of this reality show. But his being ecstatic upon his eviction is the most bland, unrealistic act I have ever seen on TV.

FEEDBACK

Say 'gay men'

From Frank Lock (freidrich99@yahoo.com):

For Dolly Ann Carvajal: I would like to point out that the use of the term "gays" refer to both men and women who are gay. I believe in your first sentence you were going for "gay men" swooning over Polo Ravales instead of "gays." Quite honestly, "gays" as you used it sounds a tad off but hey, we're all human. Maybe in future articles, you could be more specific (i.e., "girls and gay men swoon"). It's more, hmmm, fab. Just my two cents worth. :)

Good call

From Peter Bitos (peter_bitos@yahoo.com), 5331 S. Rockwell St., Chicago, Illinois, USA:

The MTRCB is right in its decision about "Brokeback Mountain." I am just wondering if they will do the same to the movie, "DaVinci Code."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ext voters wield too much power

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

ent searches at all?

On the more positive side, there are shows like "American Idol," where the juror-viewer connection appears to be more reliable and productive. All of the tilt's winners have done well in show biz—**Kelly Clarson, Ruben Studdard, Fantasia** and **Carrie Underwood** are now certified movie stars and hitmakers. Even runners-up like **Clay Aiken, Bo Bice,** and **Constantine Maroulis** have cut hit albums.

When the "AI" jurors criticize them, the show's finalists pooh-pooh their comments and loudly declare, "It's America that decides, anyway." That's true, but unfortunately for them, it seems like text-voters listen to what the jurors say, and pretty much vote along those lines.

Just recently, "our" bet, Fil-Am **Sway Peñala** got negative notes from all three "AI" jurors, but we thought that the very strong Fil-Am "text-voting machine" would still see him through. Alas, **Sway** bit the dust, despite his strong Fil-Am support.

That's unfortunate, because the tilt has lost its only Asian finalist. But it's also instructive, because it shows that text-vote brigades do have their limits.

In general, however, the text-voters have been given too much power, and have largely used it unwisely. We hope, therefore that a new talent search will be conducted on TV that bases its verdict only on the decisions of competent jurors—period.

City Kart Racing

Last Feb. 29, City Kart Racing in Sucat, Parañaque opened its 10,000 square meter circuit. MTV VJ **KC Montero** welcomed the celebrities and other guests who came to test-drive the circuit, which boasts of elevated bridge, the first of its kind in Asia.

The facility is also equipped with the latest software technology that displays racers' chrono and timing on 15 television monitors positioned all over the venue. There is also an in-house racing school that provides training modules for passionate racing enthusiasts.

Shopping spree promo

Colgate Fresh Confidence launches its P1M *barkada* shopping spree promo with a mini-concert featuring **Jay-R** and **Shaina Magdayao** at The Glorietta Activity Center at 3 p.m. today. There will also be a pre-show dance exhibition by some of the hippest young dance groups today. 10 members of the audience can win electronic gift certificates worth P1,000 each.

---

ravan

20.
ufa Mae Quinto will be a
ecial guest on May 12 and 13. Call 435-3808 or 928-3121.

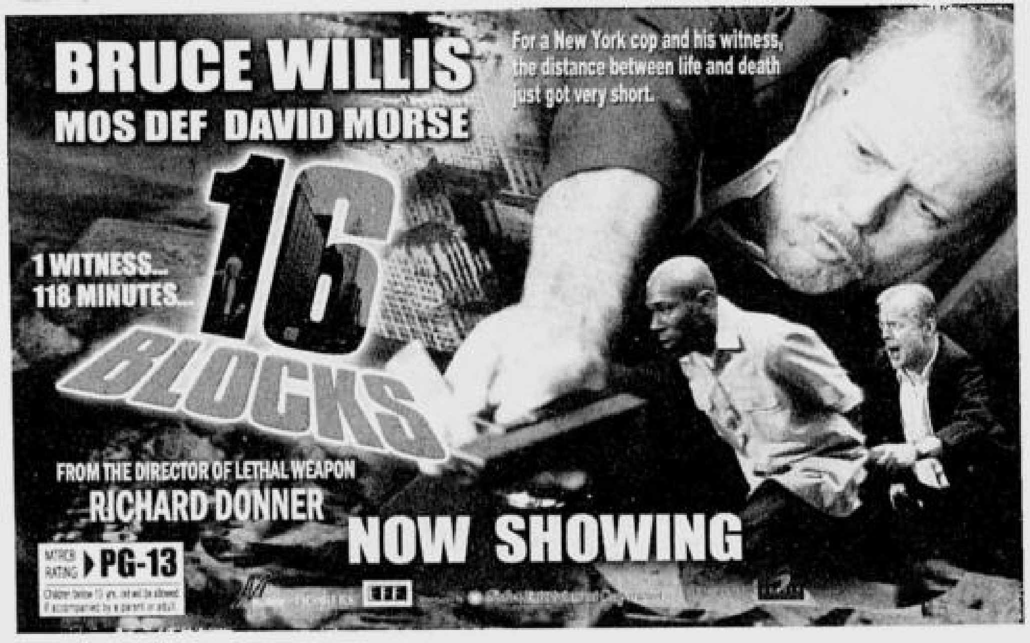
Tonight

Tribe of Levi at Tavern on the
re
wn and Eugene at
k's

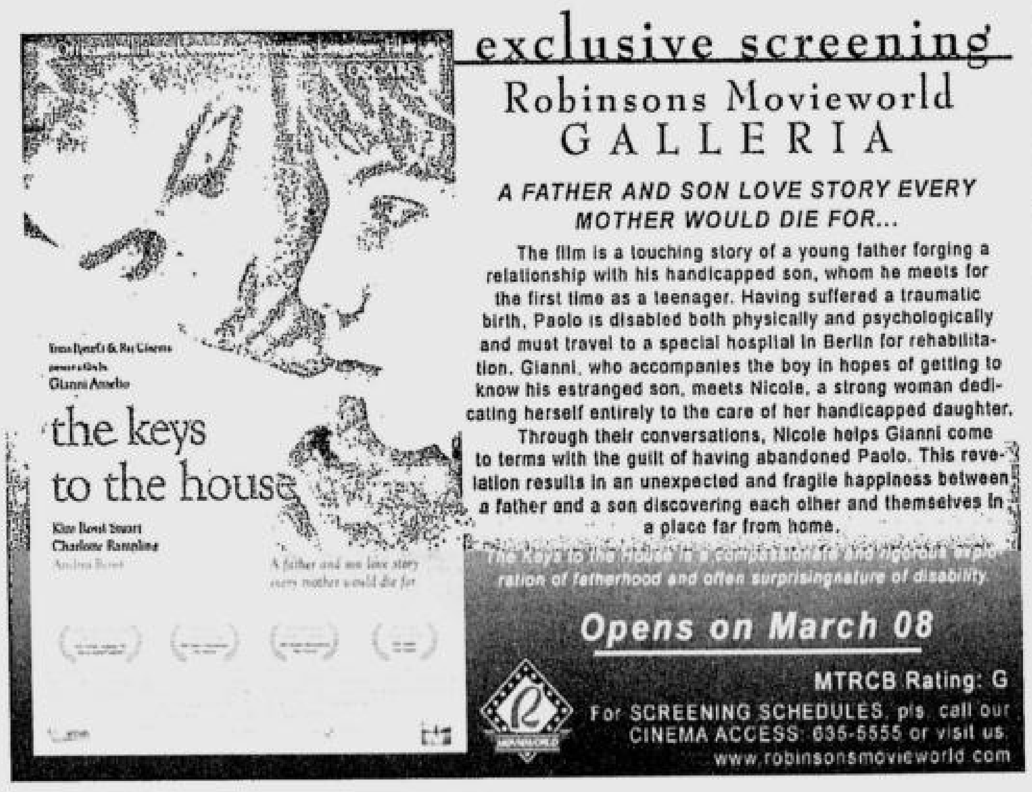
ch 14

YMP and String of
s at Tavern on the
re
ght Note at RJ Guitar

#1 MOVIE OF THE WEEK!
EDGE OF YOUR SEAT ACTION FROM START TO END.



BRUCE WILLIS
MOS DEF DAVID MORSE
For a New York cop and his witness, the distance between life and death just got very short.
1 WITNESS... 118 MINUTES...
16 BLOCKS
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF LETHAL WEAPON
RICHARD DONNER
NOW SHOWING
MTRCB RATING PG-13



the keys to the house
Gianni Amelio
Kim Rossi Stuart
Charlotte Rampling
A father and son love story every mother would die for

exclusive screening
Robinsons Movieworld
GALLERIA

A FATHER AND SON LOVE STORY EVERY MOTHER WOULD DIE FOR...

The film is a touching story of a young father forging a relationship with his handicapped son, whom he meets for the first time as a teenager. Having suffered a traumatic birth, Paolo is disabled both physically and psychologically and must travel to a special hospital in Berlin for rehabilitation. Gianni, who accompanies the boy in hopes of getting to know his estranged son, meets Nicole, a strong woman dedicating herself entirely to the care of her handicapped daughter.

Through their conversations, Nicole helps Gianni come to terms with the guilt of having abandoned Paolo. This revelation results in an unexpected and fragile happiness between a father and a son discovering each other and themselves in a place far from home.

The Keys to the House is a compassionate and rigorous exploration of fatherhood and often surprisingnature of disability.

Opens on March 08

MTRCB Rating: G

For SCREENING SCHEDULES, pls. call our CINEMA ACCESS: 635-5555 or visit us. www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

OPENS MARCH 15
LOVE IN DISGUISE
Amanda BYNES
She's THE MAN
ARE YOU REALLY WHO YOU ARE?

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MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
6th floor Shangrila Plaza EDSA corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City
Telephone: 633.2227 / 6337851 loc. 171

1 (DOLBY)	YOURS, MINE & OURS GP
2 (DOLBY)	16 BLOCKS PG13
3 (DOLBY)	DATE MOVIE R18
4 (DOLBY)	CASANOVA R13

PREMIERE

(DOLBY)	LAST HOLIDAY R13

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216

1	16 BLOCKS
2	FEARLESS - PG13
3	YOUR, MINE & OURS- GP
4	DATE MOVIE - R18

starmall EDSA-SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150

3	FEARLESS
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX)	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
5	16 BLOCKS

metropolis star cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433994

1	TIGER BLADE
2	16 BLOCKS
3	CASANOVA
4	FEARLESS

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan
Telephone No. (044) 600-3025

1	FIREWALL
2	PINK PANTHER
3	AEON FLUX

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-5271

1	THE NEW WORLD
2	PINK PANTHER
3	RESERVED
4	RESERVED

Filinvest
FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DDS)	THE DARK
2 (SDDS)	FINAL DESTINATION-3
3	UNDERCLASS MAN / BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
4 GOLD (DTS)	DATE MOVIE
5 GOLD (DOLBY)	16 BLOCKS
6 GOLD (SDDS)	YOUR'S MINE & OURS
7 GOLD (DOLBY)	CASANOVA
8 [illegible]	FEARLESS
9 [illegible]	CLOSE TO YOU
10 [illegible]	THE LAST HOLIDAY / TIGER BLADE

Blue Wave MARIKINA
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927

1 (DOLBY)	YOURS, MINE & OURS
2 (DOLBY)	DATE MOVIE
3 (DOLBY)	16 BLOCKS
4 (DOLBY)	RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228

1 (DOLBY)	FEARLESS
2	THE DARK
3	YOURS, MINE & OURS
4	16 BLOCKS
5	DATE MOVIE

MARKETPLACE Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1	PINK PANTHER
2	BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE-2
3	SNEAK CHARMER
4	RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA 2010
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274

1	YOURS, MINE & OURS
2	FEARLESS
3	TIGER BLADE

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)

1	FIREWALL
2	YOURS, MINE & OURS

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX)	BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
2	CLOSE TO YOU
3 (DTS EX)	YOURS, MINE & OURS
4	BLOODRAYNE

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1	RESERVED
2	RESERVED
3 (DOLBY)	RESERVED
4 (DTS)	RESERVED

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1	CLOSE TO YOU
2	THE NEW WORLD
3 (DOLBY)	AEON FLUX
4 (DTS)	PINK PANTHER

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	CLOSE TO YOU
2	PINK PANTHER

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72

1 (DOLBY)	CASSANOVA
2 (DOLBY)	YOURS, MINE & OURS
3 (DOLBY)	16 BLOCKS
4 (DOLBY)	LAST HOLIDAY

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	DATE MOVIE
2 (DTS)	BLOODRAYNE
3 (DOLBY)	FEARLESS
4	YOURS, MINE & OURS

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146

1	FINAL DESTINATION
2 (DOLBY)	DATE MOVIE
3 (DTS)	YOURS, MINE & OURS
4	FEARLESS

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	CLOSE TO YOU
2	PINK PANTHER
3 (DOLBY)	THE NEW WORLD

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1	CLOSE TO YOU
2	ST. ANGIE
3 (DOLBY)	NEW WORLD
4 (DTS)	MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320

1	FEARLESS
2	AEON FLUX
3 (DOLBY)	BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)

1	AEON FLUX
2	PINK PANTHER

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748

1	HIGH EXPLOSIVE
2	CLOSE TO YOU

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS)	TIGER BLADE
2	MASARAP NA PUGAD
3	MGA BABAE SA VIP ROOM
4 (DTS)	BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)	FEARLESS
2	MAGENTA
3 (DTS)	YOURS, MINE & OURS
4	CLOSE TO YOU
5	BLOODRAYNE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	THE NEW WORLD
2	CLOSE TO YOU
3	THE PINK PANTHER
4	FEARLESS

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1	SHUT UP & KISS ME
2	TAMPISAW

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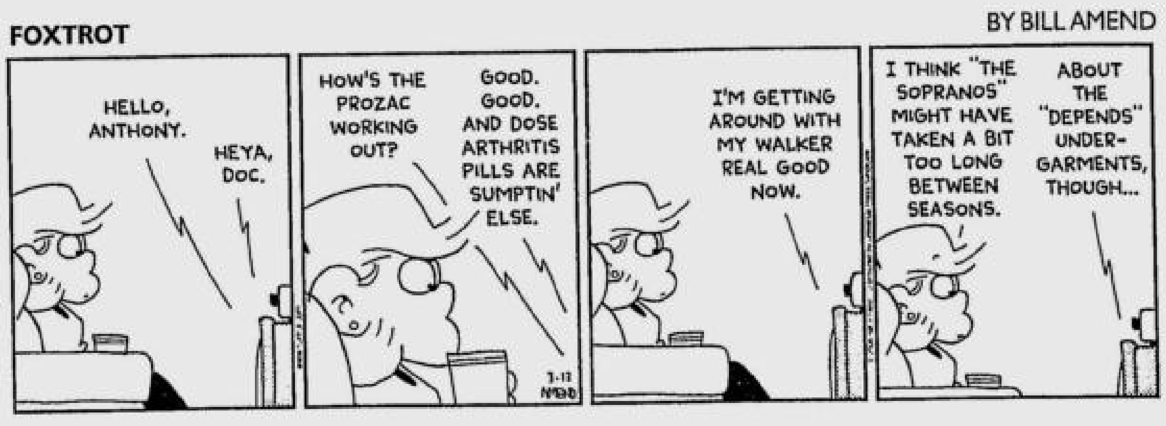
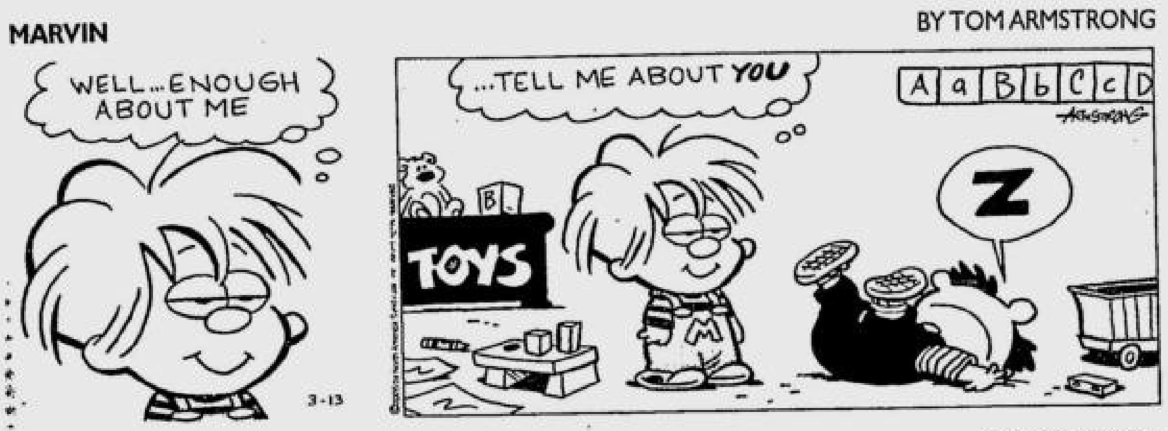
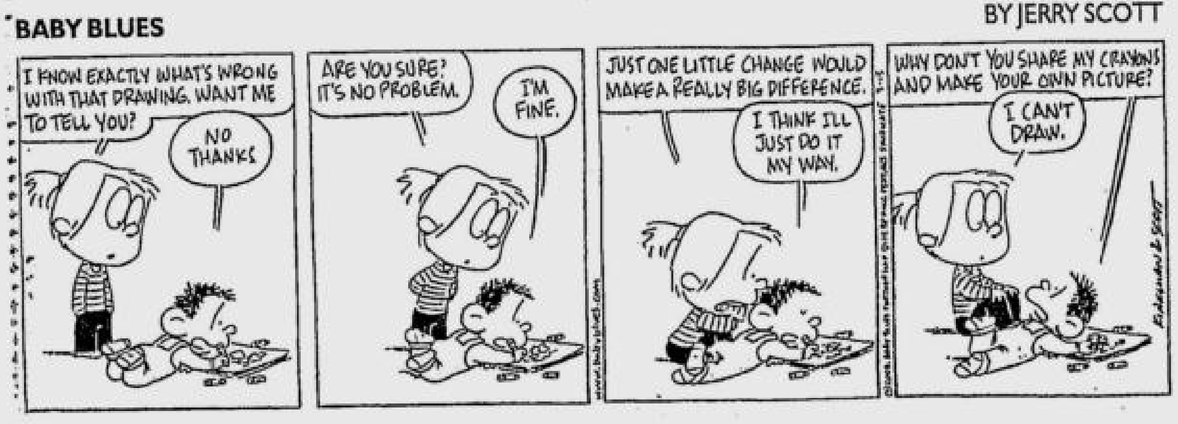
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


HELLO, ANTHONY.
HEYA, DOC.
HOW'S THE PROZAC WORKING OUT?
GOOD. GOOD. AND DOSE ARTHRITIS PILLS ARE SUMPTIN' ELSE.
3-13
I'M GETTING AROUND WITH MY WALKER REAL GOOD NOW.
I THINK "THE SOPRANOS" MIGHT HAVE TAKEN A BIT TOO LONG BETWEEN SEASONS.
ABOUT THE "DEPENDS" UNDER-GARMENTS, THOUGH...

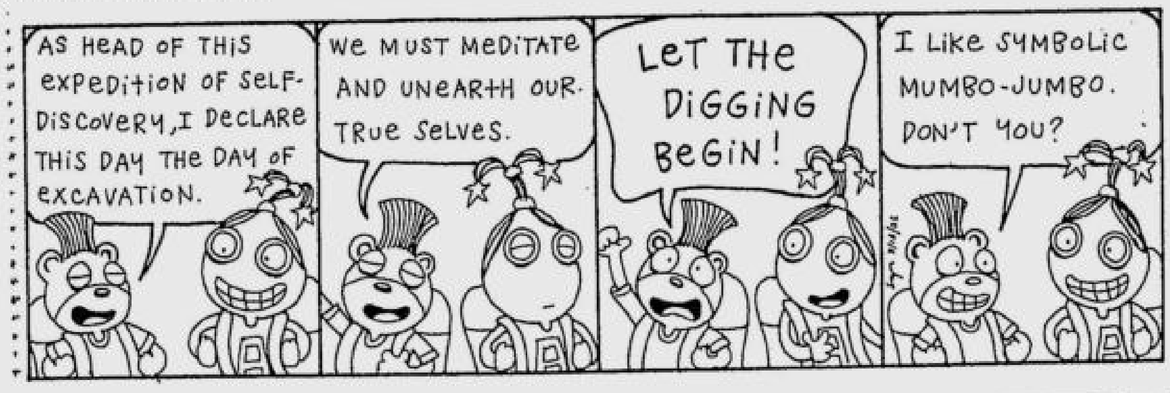
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


WELL...ENOUGH ABOUT ME
3-13
...TELL ME ABOUT YOU
A a B b C c D
ARMSTRONG
TOYS
Z

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT DRAWING. WANT ME TO TELL YOU?
NO THANKS
ARE YOU SURE? IT'S NO PROBLEM.
I'M FINE.
JUST ONE LITTLE CHANGE WOULD MAKE A REALLY BIG DIFFERENCE.
I THINK I'LL JUST DO IT MY WAY.
WHY DON'T YOU SHARE MY CRAYONS AND MAKE YOUR OWN PICTURE?
I CAN'T DRAW.

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


AS HEAD OF THIS EXPEDITION OF SELF-DISCOVERY, I DECLARE THIS DAY THE DAY OF EXCAVATION.
WE MUST MEDITATE AND UNEARTH OUR TRUE SELVES.
LET THE DIGGING BEGIN!
I LIKE SYMBOLIC MUMBO-JUMBO. DON'T YOU?

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a strong sense of destiny. You intend to be somebody. This determination helps you achieve a lot. You can survive amazing setbacks. You want to grow and evolve to become a better person in this lifetime. Sometimes you have the gift of prophecy. The year ahead is friendly, sociable and wonderful for partnerships! **Birthdate of:** Will Clark, baseballer; Neil Sedaka, singer; Dana Delaney, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You need to start this week off with extra patience and tolerance for others. People are always a bit more tense before the Full Moon. (This includes you.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Be patient with children and with people connected to sporting events and show business. It's easy to let tension build up now. Primarily, this is because tomorrow is a Full Moon.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Getting along with family members is a challenge for everyone. There is not a family on this planet that does not suffer from negativity sometime. Be gentle with others.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Be careful when driving, jogging, cycling or walking. The tension that is building up today (before tomorrow's Full Moon) makes you a bit accident-prone. (Oops.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You have increasing concerns today about money—earning it, spending it or both. Don't worry. The Full Moon tomorrow is making you anxious about this.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Tomorrow's Full Moon is in your sign. That's why conversations with those who are closest to you are a bit tense today. Try to ignore this. Relax and be friendly.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Work alone and be patient with co-workers. It's very easy to be demanding today! But this just sets off a chain reaction that upsets everyone! Mellow out.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Avoid arguments with a friend today. Be gentle. Most Scorpios do not realize how strong and powerful they are when they relate one-on-one with others. (It's true!)

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Parents must be patient with children today. Romantic interests must also be less demanding of each other. Problems always intensify before a Full Moon, and then they diminish after it peaks.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Don't be in a rush to do things today. Take your time. And if you don't know what you're doing, do it neatly.

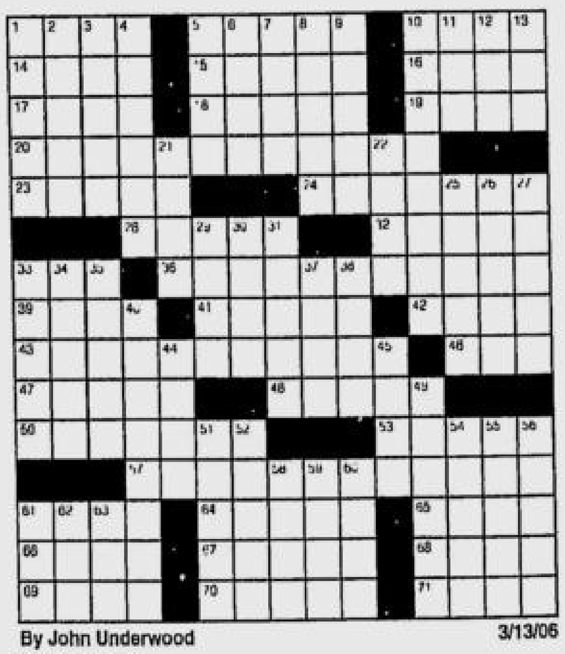
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Don't be hasty to spend your money today. And think twice about how you want to earn it. You could be confused about finances. Fortunately, this confusion passes in a couple of days.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Tomorrow's Full Moon directly opposes your sign. That's why you feel a bit tense when talking to partners and spouses. Don't let your emotions run away with you. Remain calm.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Dines
5 Country singer Brooks
10 Nudges
14 Secret plan
15 One of Chicago's airports
16 First family garden?
17 Scintilla
18 Grip aid
19 Scottish dance
20 Leg cramp
23 Military tribute
24 Breed of cat
28 Heronlike bird
32 Luxurious country house
33 Record time?
36 Ambitious type
39 Operatic highlight
41 Foundation of an atoll
42 Bread end
43 Dormitory confab
46 Undercover agent
47 Counting everything
48 Stage direction
50 "Repulsion" star Catherine
53 Painter Grandma
57 Auto mechanic
61 Martial art
64 Small wood
65 Doggone it!
66 Cupid
67 Confused
68 Relating to the ear
69 Countless
70 De-fleeced?
71 Gets the point

DOWN
1 Sweeping sagas
2 Hilo hello
3 Entire
4 Be very hungry
5 Writer Vidal
6 Crow's-nest call
7 Skin eruption
8 Groups of three
9 Painter Rousseau
10 Hebrew prophet
11 Lofty poem
12 Turn to the right!
13 NBC classic
21 Theater section
22 Reliever's success
25 Pixies
26 Stop counting sheep?
27 "__ to bed..."
29 Sprint
30 Freudian subjects
31 Concise
33 Fanatical
34 Cut back
35 Site of the Duomo
37 Downpour
38 Record spoiler
40 Symbolic story
44 Slander
45 Captain of the "Nautilus"
49 Repetitious musical themes
51 "Viva Las __"
52 "This Island __"
54 Do figure 8's
55 Spine-tingling
56 Brings into harmony
58 Mediocre
59 Always
60 Unnecessarily stern
61 Traffic tie-up
62 Thurman of "Les Miserables"
63 Knotts or Ameche



By John Underwood
New York, NY

3/13/06

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

T	R	A	W	L	E	R	■	R	A	G	T	O	P	S
R	E	C	E	I	V	E	■	A	C	R	O	B	A	T
E	S	C	A	P	E	S	■	S	H	A	N	A	N	A
S	O	R	V	I	N	O	■	C	O	M	E	D	I	C
S	L	U	E	D	■	L	I	A	O	■	S	I	C	K
E	V	E	R	■	C	U	R	L	■	Q	U	A	K	E
D	E	S	S	E	R	T	S	■	Z	E	P	H	Y	R
■	■	■	■	■	M	O	E	■	P	O	I	■	■	■
M	E	E	T	U	P	■	N	O	N	I	S	S	U	E
A	T	L	A	S	■	T	I	R	E	■	H	A	N	A
S	H	A	R	■	T	E	X	T	■	P	E	T	E	R
T	A	N	T	A	R	A	■	L	I	L	L	I	A	N
I	N	T	E	R	I	M	■	A	D	U	L	A	T	E
F	O	R	S	A	K	E	■	N	E	G	A	T	E	S
F	L	A	T	B	E	D	■	D	E	S	C	E	N	T

3/13/06

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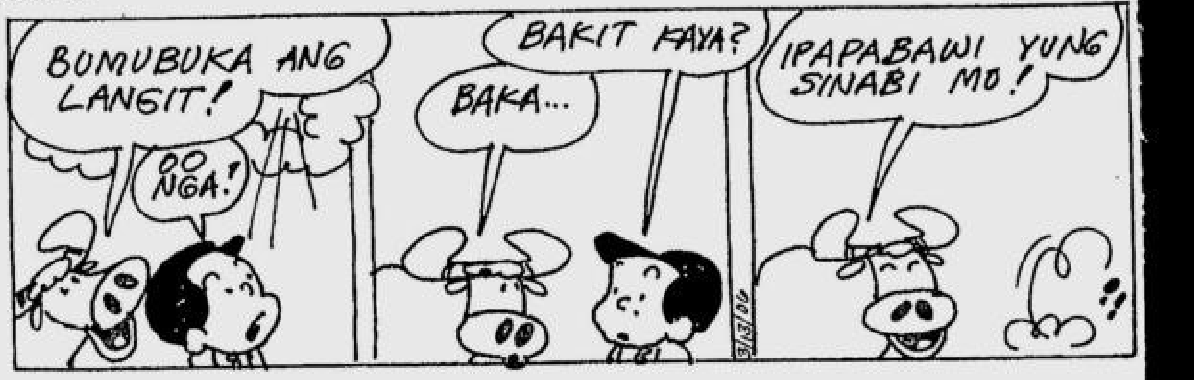
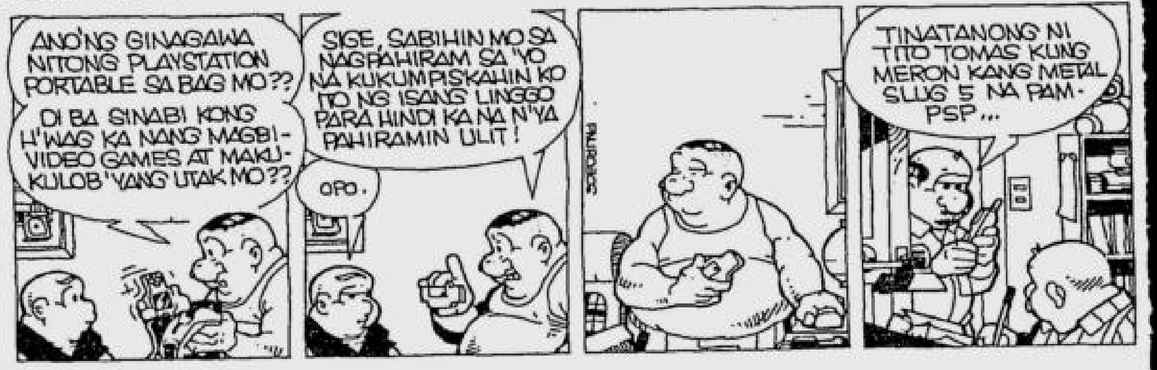
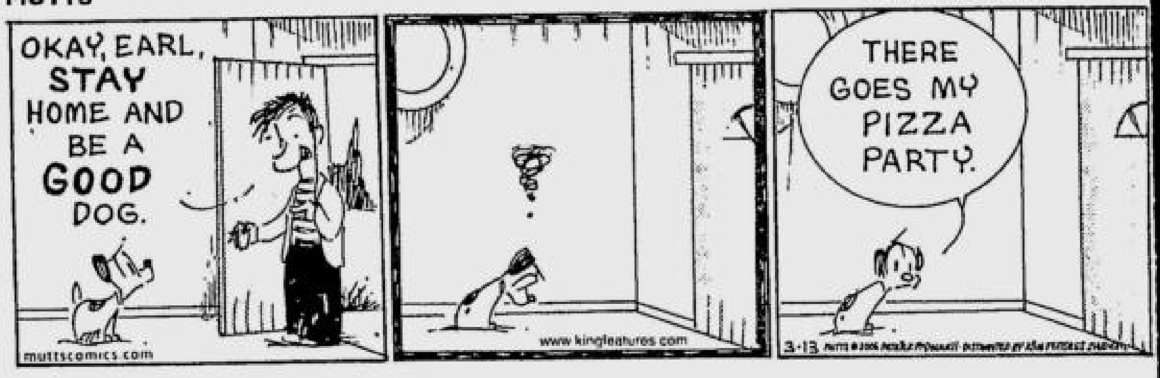
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


BUMUBUKA ANG LANGIT!
OO NGA!
BAKA...
BAKIT KAYA?
3/13/06
IPAPABAWI YUNG SINABI MO!

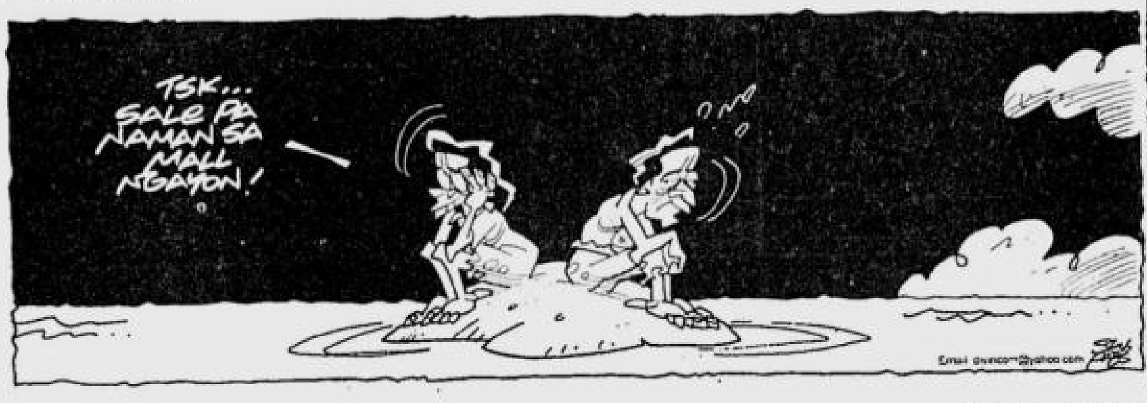
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


ANO'NG GINAGAWA NITONG PLAYSTATION PORTABLE SA BAG MO??
DI BA SINABI KONG H'WAG KA NANG MAGBI-VIDEO GAMES AT MAKU-KULOB 'YANG UTAK MO??
SIGE, SABIHIN MO SA NAGPAHIRAM SA 'YO NA KUKUMPISKAHIN KO ITO NG ISANG LINGGO PARA HINDI KA NA N'YA PAHIRAMIN ULIT!
OPO.
PMJR.
TINATANONG NI TITO TOMAS KUNG MERON KANG METAL SLUG 5 NA PAM-PSP...

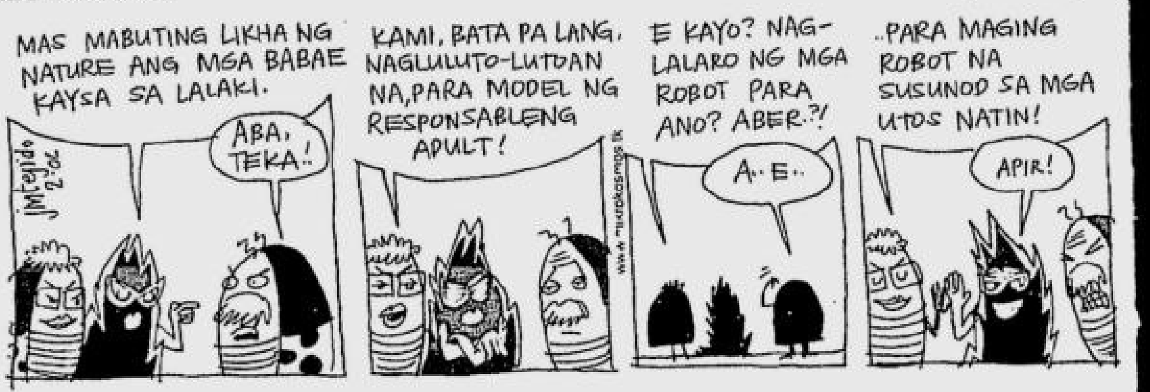
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


OKAY, EARL, STAY HOME AND BE A GOOD DOG.
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com
THERE GOES MY PIZZA PARTY.
3-13

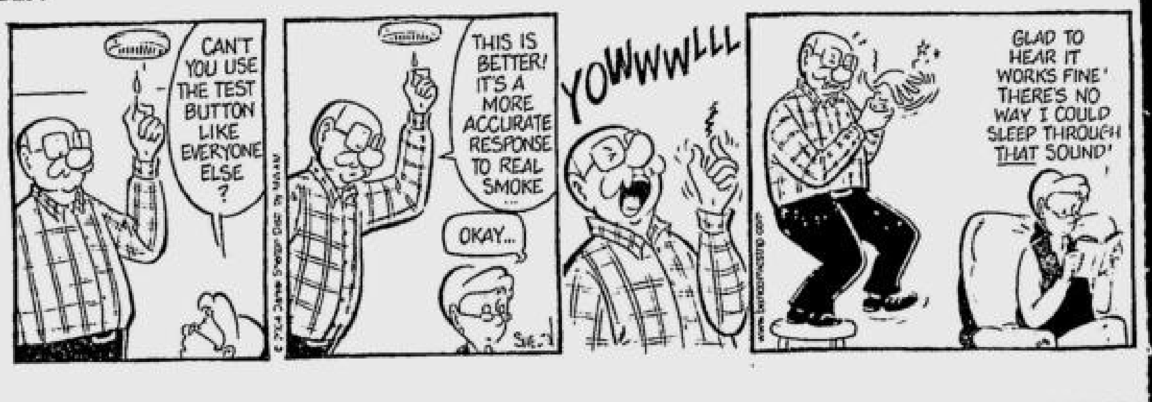
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


TSK... SALE PA NAMAN SA MALL NGAYON!

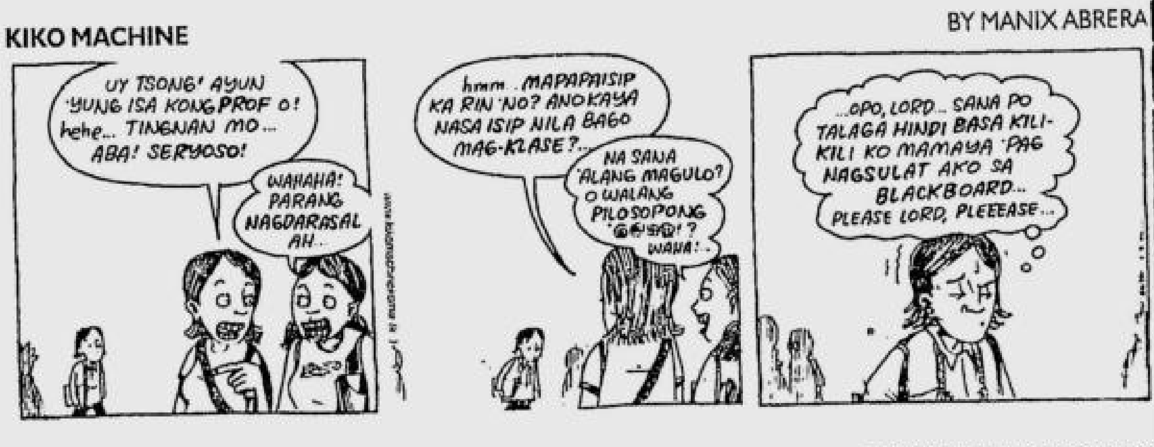
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MAS MABUTING LIKHA NG NATURE ANG MGA BABAE KAYSA SA LALAKI.
ABA, TEKA!
KAMI, BATA PA LANG, NAGLULUTO-LUTUAN NA, PARA MODEL NG RESPONSABLENG ADULT!
E KAYO? NAG-LALARO NG MGA ROBOT PARA ANO? ABER?!
A.. E..
..PARA MAGING ROBOT NA SUSUNOD SA MGA UTOS NATIN!
APIR!

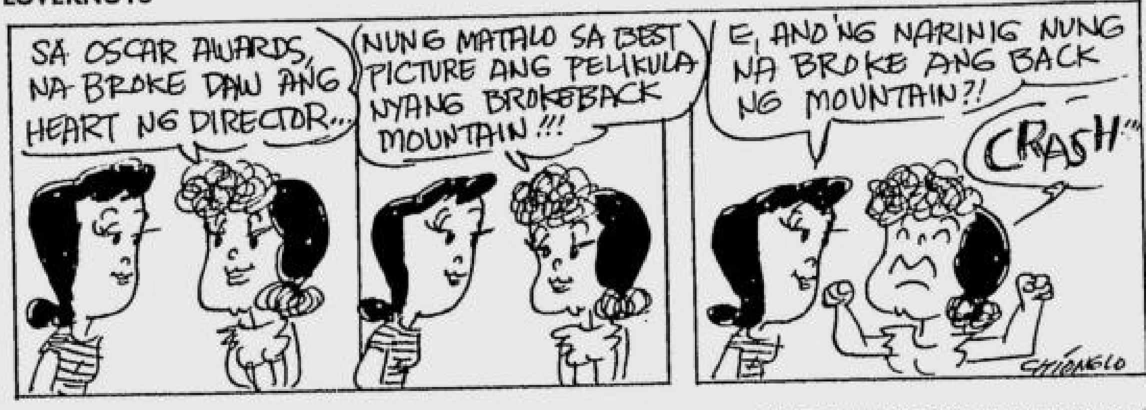
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


CAN'T YOU USE THE TEST BUTTON LIKE EVERYONE ELSE?
THIS IS BETTER! IT'S A MORE ACCURATE RESPONSE TO REAL SMOKE
OKAY...
YOWWWLLL
GLAD TO HEAR IT WORKS FINE! THERE'S NO WAY I COULD SLEEP THROUGH THAT SOUND!

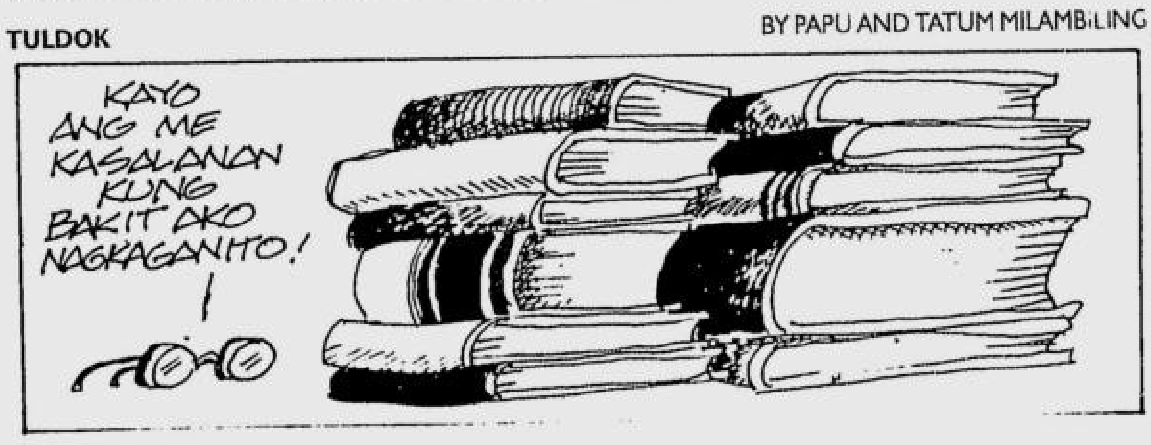
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


UY TSONG! AYUN 'YUNG ISA KONG PROF O! hehe... TINGNAN MO... ABA! SERYOSO!
WAHAHA! PARANG NAGDARASAL AH..
hmm.. MAPAPAISIP KA RIN 'NO? ANO KAYA NASA ISIP NILA BAGO MAG-KLASE?..
NA SANA 'ALANG MAGULO? O WALANG PILOSOPONG @#$%! ? WAHA!..
...OPO, LORD... SANA PO TALAGA HINDI BASA KILI-KILI KO MAMAYA 'PAG NAGSULAT AKO SA BLACKBOARD... PLEASE LORD, PLEEEASE...

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SA OSCAR AWARDS, NA-BROKE DAW ANG HEART NG DIRECTOR...
NUNG MATALO SA BEST PICTURE ANG PELIKULA NYANG BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN!!!
E, ANO'NG NARINIG NUNG NA BROKE ANG BACK NG MOUNTAIN?!
CRASH
CHIONGLO

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


KAYO ANG ME KASALANAN KUNG BAKIT AKO NAGKAGANITO!

'Gudtaym' no good time

By Paul Daza
Contributor

SAM Milby and Cass Ponti (right)

"GUDTAYM" IS THE new ABS-CBN comedy variety show starring the original Pinoy Big Brother (PBB) housemates—Say, Chix, Sam, Franzen, Jason, Uma—with Toni Gonzaga and Vhong Navarro of "Wazzup Wazzup."

A dull mix of recycled contests, comedy sketches and song and dance numbers, "Gudtaym" doesn't exactly sparkle with comic genius. Obviously, it is meant only to extend the waning shelf life of the more popular housemates. And with an 11:30 p.m. Friday time slot; it's more likely to remedy insomnia than steal viewers from GMA 7's "Bubble Gang."

"Gudtaym's" first segment, "Huli Sa Akto," is a game of charades where the housemates try to guess a long Tagalog sentence, for example, "*Nahulog ang butiki sa tasa ng mainit na kape*" in under two minutes. It might have been funnier to have Sam Milby (who struggles with Tagalog) guess the phrase, instead of helping out a teammate with gestures.

Scary

Then comes "Gaya Mo 'To," a mimicking exercise where the housemates and their guests imitate Vhong Navarro's bone-crunching dance moves. It's amusing, not only because Navarro is an excellent dancer, but also because it's scary to watch untrained dancers copy a pro.

The third portion, "McDate Tayo," is a game where Say Alonzo has to choose a date from among four handsome guys. The gimmick? Each of them uses a McDonald's desert product to describe how they feel about her. The problem? Everything is scripted—from what "searcher" Say says to the words the "searchee" uses to woo her. We know this because Say constantly glances at the idiot board as much as the guys struggle with memorized spiels.

It doesn't help that the camera invariably shows the studio audience looking bored.

Breakout star

If studio audience reaction is any indication, however, PBB crush ng bayan Sam Milby is certainly this batch's true breakout star. His "Special Sam-One" segment, in which he plays the guitar and sings a couple of tunes to three lucky ladies, is never lacking in hysterical shrieks and cheers of delight from admirers.

"Gudtaym's" last two segments, "Hotsie Chickie Bodies Dance Contest" and "Kwentong Gudtaym," offer nothing we haven't already seen on noontime shows and variety shows from decades past. "Hotsie Chickie Bodies" is a dance contest where sexy women try to keep up as the tempo of the music they're gyrating to increases. In this portion, PBB *pasaway* favorite Franzen is relegated to gawking at the ladies from the sidelines.

REVIEW

> It's more likely to remedy insomnia than steal viewers from 'Bubble Gang'

"Kwentong Gudtaym" is a charmless fairy tale spoof injected with a "Simon Says" element. As the housemates and guests play out a senseless retelling of "Sleeping Beauty," they have to obey instructions from fairy tale master Vhong Navarro (e.g. freeze in position while crossing your legs). If they're unable to do as Vhong commands, Toni Gonzaga pours flour on their heads.

If there's anything that network executives can learn from "Gudtaym" and other shows that have tried to make stars of the PBB housemates, it's that most of these guys and gals are likeable only when they're being themselves in Kuya's house. Once you give them a comedy situation to mine and lines to read off a tele-prompter, they lose much of their charm and personality.

How appropriate that "Gudtaym" should be spelled that way by the show's creators and producers. They seem to know that their show isn't really a "good time"—it just sounds like one. They could also have called it "Bedtaym," but that would've been too obvious.

A pitch for moms

NIKKI Gil

NIKKI GIL MAKES out of the graduation season an excuse to pay "a personal tribute" to her mom, Julie, via Vaseline shampoo's "Glowing Inside" campaign. At the recent launch of the campaign, Nikki said to Julie before singing the full-length jingle: "Given another life, I would still choose to be your daughter."

ARANETA CENTER

Gateway Alimall FarmersPlaza

THE ONLY CINEPLEX IN THE COUNTRY
Gateway CiNePLEx*10
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX

THE DARK 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40	UNDERCLASSMAN 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30	16 BLOCKS 11:45 / 2:15 / 4:45 / 7:15 / 9:45	GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA
THE LAST HOLIDAY 1:50 / 4:20 / 6:50 / 9:20	YOURS, MINE & OURS 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30	DATE MOVIE 1:30 / 3:30 / 5:30 / 7:30 / 9:30	16 BLOCKS 1:40 / 4:10 / 6:40 / 9:10
THE FEARLESS 12:30 / 2:40 / 4:50 / 7:00 / 9:40	CASANOVA 2:00 / 4:30 / 7:00 / 9:30	FINAL DESTINATION 3 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30	ONLY P120 ADMISSION GLOBE PLATINUM P249/P299

ALIMALL CINEMAS

16 BLOCKS 12:40 / 3:10 / 5:40 / 8:10	THE FEARLESS 11:25 / 1:35 / 3:45 / 5:55 / 8:05	DATE MOVIE 12:30 / 4:30 / 6:30 / 8:30
TIGER BLADE 12:20 / 2:20 / 4:20 / 6:20 / 8:20	THE DARK 11:50 / 2:00 / 4:10 / 6:20 / 8:30	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

For ticket inquiries, please call TicketNet at 911-5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph

ARANETA COLISEUM

HERMANS HERMITS - PETER NOONE CONCERT
MARCH 17, FRIDAY 8 pm

SERGIO MENDES & BRASIL 2006
MARCH 18, SATURDAY 8 pm

IN THE ACTION TRADITION OF 'HEAT'!
WHILE THE HEADLINES ARE BEING BROADCAST, THE WORST SCENARIO IS HAPPENING.

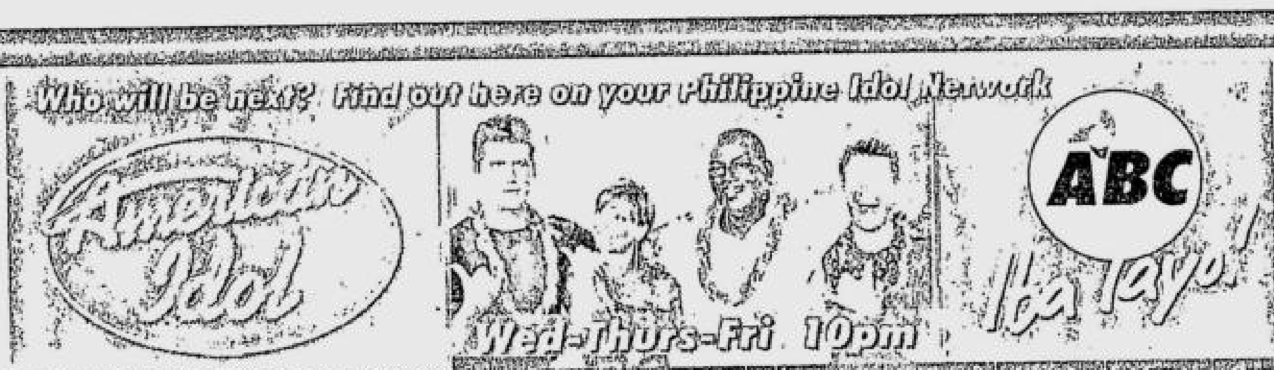
SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE
JOHNNIE TO
BREAKING NEWS
Starring RICHIE JEN
KELLY CHEN NICK CHEUNG
CHEUNG SUI FAI
Directed by JOHNNIE TO
Distributed by Solar Entertainment Corporation

IN THEATERS MARCH 15

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Monday, March 13, 2006



Who will be next? Find out here on your Philippine Idol Network
American Idol
Wed-Thurs-Fri 10pm
ABC
Iba Tayo!

Provided by ClickTheCity.com

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2. Key in CTC TV and send to 2333 for Globe and to 225 for Smart. PhP2.50 per SMS sent.

ABC 5	WNCAA (Rerun)	Speed	TNA Impact	Sentro	How Clean Is Your House	ABC Action Movies	Big News	Fear Factor	Tokoo TV									
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema	Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr Bean	Naruto	Outstanding Twins	TV Patrol World	Gulong Ng Palad	Sa Piling Mo	Prinsesa Lulu	Pinoy Big Brother	OK Fine! Whatever	Insider					
AXN	Crazy In Alabama	E Buzz	Cold Squad (Season V)	Amazon	Maximum Exposure (Season II)	The 4400 (Season 2)	Lost (Season II)	House										
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Codename Kids Next Door	Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Energy Bomb	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinema One	Biyaya Ng Lupa	Isa Pa Lamang	Sapol Kita Mula Ulo Hanggang Paa	Milan	Ano Bang Meron Ka?													
Cinemax	Ghost (2:45 PM)	Blue Demon (4:45 PM)	Shirley Valentine (6:15 PM)	Dave	Into The Sun (9:50 PM)	Delusion (11:25PM)												
CNN	Business International	World News	World Sport	Larry King Live	Business International	World News Asia	World News	Living Golf	World News Asia	World News	World Sport							
Discovery Channel	I Shouldn't Be Alive	Monster Garage	Nile	I Shouldn't Be Alive	Wild Discovery	British Empire In Colour	Miracle Man John of God	I Shouldn't Be Alive	New Detectives									
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/[illegible] Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney	Black Hole High	So Little Time	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney		
ESPN	Pro Billiards 2005 Men's Int'l. Challenge	World Pool Masters '02 Finals	X-Games Files '02	X-Games Files '02	Extreme Programming Sports Mania	In The Driver's Seat	Sportscenter Asia	Pro Billiards '05 Men's Trick Shot Magic	Table Tennis '04 [illegible] C'ships	LPGA Golf Fields Open in Hawaii 1st rd	Sportscenter Asia							
ETC	Project Runway	Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show	Project Runway	Queer Eye For The Straight Guy	ET Weekend	Joan Of Arcadia						
EWTN	Benediction And Devotion Encore	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Bible Treasure Chest	Image Of God	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Voices On Virtue	EWTN Gallery	The Catholic Faith & Vatican II	Sunday Night With [illegible] Fr. Benedict Groeschel	Threshold Of Hope	Daily Mass (SAP) Live	Angelus (10:15PM)	Defending Life	Catholic Compass			
Fox News	Fox Report Sunday	Beltway Boys	Fox News Watch	Bulls & Bears	Cavuto On Business	Forbes On Fox	Cashin' In	Fox & Friends	Fox News Live									
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	First Love Of A Royale Prince	Dragonball Z	Great Teacher Onizuka	Le Robe de Mariage	24 Oras	Extra Challenge	Encantadia	My Name Is Kim Sam Soon	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace/Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita	Saksi					
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched	Child Of Our Time	Earthsea (3:50 PM)	Ladies Man	Bewitched	The Nanny	Strong Medicine	Judging Amy	Jane Doe: Now You See It Now You Don't	Mcleod's Daughters IV (10:35PM)	Strong Medicine (11:25PM)							
HBO	The Molly Maguires	Dark Horse	Two Brothers (7:15PM)	After The Sunset	Dawn Of The Dead													
Hero TV	Yakitate! Japan	Mr Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Beyblade	Crush Gear Turbo	Gamburgar	Gosaurer	Rajin-Oh	Naruto	Mirmo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh	Yakitate! Japan	Mr Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Gosaurer
IBC 13	EZ Shop	Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Krusada Kontra Krimen	Home Shopping Network	ME TV	Japan Video Topics	Global Family Series	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network								
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman	Bottomline	Afterburn	X-Men Evolution	Jack Yard	Mad TV	That 70s Show	Family Guy	The Late Show David Letterman	Jack In The Box							
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Food 911	E! Extra: Jackie Collins Presents Hitched In Hollywood	NY Fashion Week	Life & Style	Radical Sabbatical	Genuine Article	How Do I Look		
MTV Philippines	Rockola	MTV2 Korn's See You on the Other Side	Chart Attack	Viva La Bam	Pop Inc	2006 MAA Summer Specials	MTV Hits	VH1 All Access: Outrageous Transformations	Massive	Get Spotted	TRL	The 70's House	Wild N' Out	Homecoming	VH1 Video Collections			
MYX	Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXILOG	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten	Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXILOG				
National Geographic	Africa From The Ground Up	Ultimate Survivor	Sea Of Snakes	Wildlife Diary	Planet Wild	Top 5	Wow!	About Asia	Terrorism Week: Bioterror Alert/ Nat Geographic Specials: Animal Wing Secrets	In The Womb	Journey Into Amazonia: Waterworlds/The Land Reborn/The Big Top							
NBN	Value Vision	New Life TV Shopping	Teledyaryo	Diyos Ko, Mahal Ko Sila	Tinig ng Bayan (Live)	Teledyaryo	Dial M	Bantay OCW With Susan K										
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	Hey Arnold!	Rocket Power	My Life As A Teenage Robot	All Grown Up	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	My Life As A Teenage Robot	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star
PBO	Anak Pagsubok Lang	[illegible] Ang Nakaraan	Cross My Heart	Sanggano't Sanggago	Kuman Sa Hi-way													
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin	Zentrix	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)	Moms	Love At Aegean Sea	Irene	Mars	Laugh To Laugh And Ball	[illegible]	News On Q	Lipa Ng Kabuhayan	Irene	Romance				
RPN 9	TV Shopping	Global Window	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Scare Tactics	NBA On RPN	Newswatch Now	Global Window	[illegible] For Truth									
SBN 21	New Life TV Shopping	Winner TV Shopping	SBN Music Video	Oras Ng Himala	Oras ng Katotohanan	SBN Music Video												
Solar Sports	IBF China Masters 2006 Finals	IBF China Masters 2005 Finals	Greatest Classics	Sagupaan	NBA Game: Nets @ NO/OKC Hornets	Sportsdesk	Philippine Open Finals											
Sports Plus	4th Samsung Golf World	Golf Today	Ultimate Fighting Championship	Arena Football Dallas vs Tampa Bay	The Honda Classic Final Rd.													
Star Movies	Father Of The Bride Part II	The Cave (5:45 PM)	Broken Lizard's Club Dread	The First Power	The Assignment													
Star World	The Bold & The Beautiful	General Hospital	Angel	The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	My Wife And Kids	Everybody Loves Raymond/Still Standing/[illegible]	King Of Queens	Frasier	Monk	Seinfeld	My Wife And Kids				
Studio 23	Bewitched	Masked Rider Ryuki	Batman Beyond	Dragon Booster	Spirits	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	The Swan Season 2	Charmed (8:20PM)	Lost (9:10 PM)	News Central	The West Wing	Travel Time					

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

'American Idol' picks Final 12

BYE, Gedeon!

(Clockwise from top left) Chris, Taylor, Kellie, Katharine, Kevin, Mandisa, Elliott, Ace, Paris, Lisa, Melissa and Bucky

"AMERICAN Idol's" Final 12 contenders were named this week after the last pre-final elimination.

Kinnik Sky and Will Makar were the first to receive the bad news. Sky, who had consistently been in the dreaded bottom three, took the verdict with grace and ended her stint with a strong performance that might have kept her in the competition.

Makar seemed equally prepared for the results.

Next to go were the two with the second lowest votes, GedeonMcKinney and Ayla Brown.

McKinney smiled through his last performance on the show and made supporters wondering how it ended for him despite his very strong showing the previous night, with "When a Man Loves a Woman." last Thursday.

But Brown could not keep the tears from coming, in spite of judge Paula Abdul's consolation, "You're a winner in whatever you do."

The Final 12 are: (guys) Ace Young, Taylor Hicks, Bucky Covington, Chris Daughtry, Elliot Yamin, Kevin Covais, (and girls) Katharine McPhee, Kellie Pickler, Lisa Tucker, Mandisa, Melissa McGhee and Paris Bennett.

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Manila Philharmonic Orchestra (Mar. 11) Rachel Ann Go (Mar. 12) Barbie Almabis (Mar. 25) Starmall Edsa
for movie schedules log on to www.clickthecity.com

ROUNDUP

Sympathy & comfort

NEW YORK—LANCE ARMSTRONG COMFORTed 13-year-old Will Reeve less than two days after his mother, Dana Reeve, died of lung cancer.

LANCE Armstrong AP

"I would say that his spirits were pretty good considering that, in the last 18 months, he's lost his father, his mother and his grandmother," Armstrong told syndicated entertainment show "Inside Edition" on Wednesday. Will's father, Christopher Reeve, died in October 2004.

Armstrong said he became close to Will during his mother's illness.

"I love hanging with him," the cyclist said. "I never thought I'd say that about a 13-year-old, but he's a great kid." *AP*

Weisz for Burberry

NEW YORK—The public has seen a lot of mama-to-be Rachel Weisz lately—first at the Golden Globes in a gold Donna Karan gown and then at the Oscars in a sleek black Narciso Rodriguez gown.

RACHEL Weisz

Now Weisz, who is seven months pregnant, is the face of Burberry's ad campaign for the new fragrance London. The ads were shot last fall.

The 35-year-old actress, who won an Oscar on Sunday for her role in "The Constant Gardener," is a fashion-industry favorite.

"I love beautiful things and beautiful fashion," Weisz said in a recent phone interview. "I'm British. I grew up with Burberry being the ultimate brand in chic, elegance and history." AP

Bad boy Bruce

BOGOTA, Colombia—Colombia has IT in for Hollywood's ultimate tough guy.

BRUCE Willis AFP

Andres Pastrana, the country's ambassador in Washington, scolded actor Bruce Willis on Friday for suggesting that the United States should consider invading Colombia as part of its war on drugs.

At a media event in New York to promote his new film, "16 Blocks," Willis said the United States should weigh "going to Colombia and doing whatever it takes to end the cocaine trade."

Willis' publicist in Los Angeles declined to comment. *AP*

Loving 'Everybody'

LOS ANGELES—Two stars and the creator of "Everybody Loves Raymond" may be coming back to American television, but not as a package deal.

Patricia Heaton, who played Ray Romano's wife in the long-running CBS comedy, is making a half-hour pilot for ABC in which she plays a widowed mom.

Brad Garrett, who played Romano's brother, is starring in the Fox pilot "'Til Death" as a married man whose next-door neighbors are newlyweds.

"Raymond" creator Phil Rosenthal is working on "Play Nice," a comedy pilot for CBS about siblings running a family owned toy company. AP

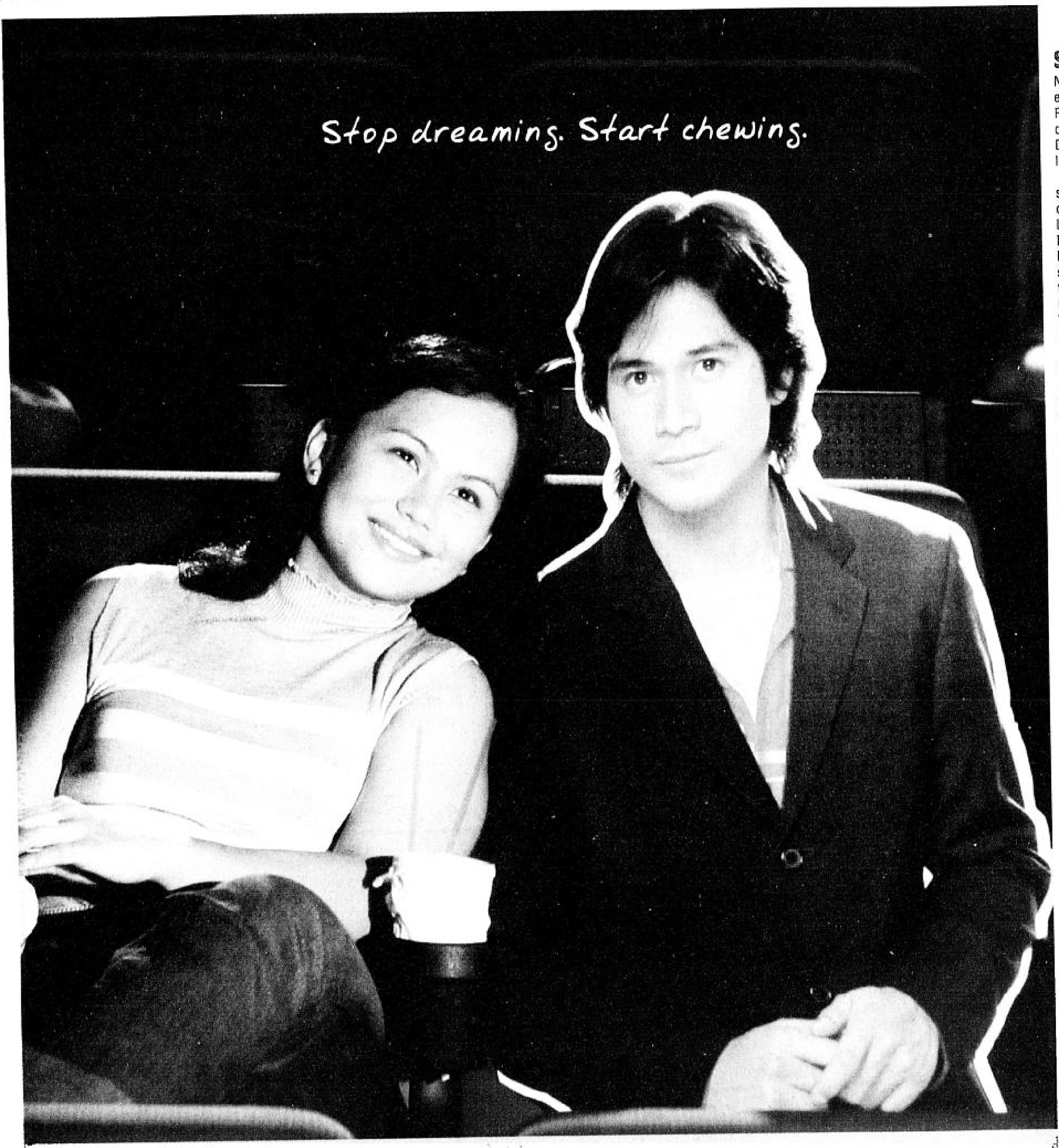
Bullock's latest

NEW YORK—Sandra Bullock has agreed to star in a film about "Peyton Place" author Grace Metalious, whose million-selling novel scandalized the nation 50 years ago and eventually ruined the author's life.

SANDRA Bullock AFP

Bullock co-produces with Carol Baum, whose previous films include "Fly Away Home" and the remake of "Father of the Bride." Naomi Foner, whose credits include "Running on Empty," is writing the screenplay.

"Metalious was a housewife with three kids running around with runny noses, living in a town (Gilmanton, New Hampshire) where she didn't fit in," Baum said. "Meanwhile, unbeknownst to anybody, she was writing the sexiest novel in history, in her kitchen." *AP*

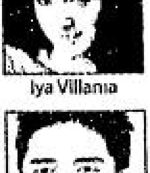


Stop dreaming. Start chewing.

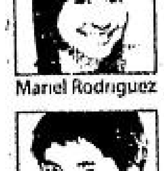
Toni Gonzaga

Piolo Pascual

Say Alonzo

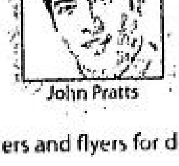


Iya Villania



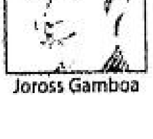
Mariel Rodriguez

Kat Alano



John Pratts

Mikel Campos



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1st Draw	March 4, 2006	February 26, 2006	Four (4) Winners
2nd Draw	March 25, 2006	March 19, 2006	Four (4) Winners
3rd Draw	April 17, 2006	April 10, 2006	Two (2) Winners

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MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2006

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BSP says peso still 'slightly undervalued'

UBS agrees peso's gains sustainable

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas said the peso, which surged to three-and-a-half year highs to the dismay of exporters and some economists, was still "slightly undervalued" at its current level.

Asked whether the local currency, which closed at 51.30 on Friday after peaking at 50.88:$1 last week, has attained its fair value, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said: "We're getting there, but it's still slightly undervalued in terms of purchasing power parity."

Tagged as Asia's best performing currency last year when it gained 6 percent to 53.09:$1, the peso has rallied by another 3.37 percent or P1.79 versus the greenback so far this year.

When the peso was trading at 55.755 to $1 in early 2004 during the run-up to the presidential elections, then BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura likewise said the peso was undervalued as the market was demanding political risk premium.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo explained that the purchasing power parity noted by Tetangco was the same as the real effective exchange rate (REER) or the "law of one price"—the measure of whether or not a currency was losing competitiveness.

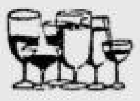
The peso's REER considers two factors: the inflation differential between the Philippines and competitor-countries and the weighted nominal competitiveness versus other currencies.

"The law of one price simply says that if inflation here is higher than in Malaysia, for instance, the peso must depreciate so that there will be some balance between the price of McDonalds' Big Mac burger versus the same item in the other country," Guinigundo said.

On that basis, Guinigundo said that if we were

BSP/B7

WHAT'S INSIDE

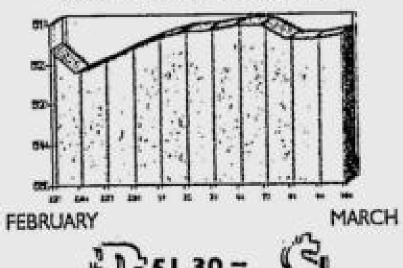


Winston's gambit /B5

NTC clamps down on text 'spam' /B12

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



P51.30 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 10, 2006

¥118.22 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 10, 2006

GOLD: $545.70-546.20

per ounce Hong Kong, March 10, 2006

STOCK MARKET

Lackluster trading seen

LACKLUSTER TRADING IS EXPECTED THIS week due to little economic and corporate news to entice investors, according to AB Capital Securities.

AB Capital said in a note to clients that the market has seen most of 2005 corporate earnings and first-quarter results would not be out until the middle of next month.

On the political front, the brokerage said that the threat on President Macapagal-Arroyo seemed to have waned, but what was more worrisome is a possible increase in US interest rates that could raise borrowing

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BSP allows rural banks to offer FCDU services

By Doris C. Dumlao

TO ENCOURAGE OVERSEAS FILIPINO workers to send their remittances through formal channels, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has allowed rural banks to handle foreign currency deposit units (FCDUs).

BSP Deputy Governor Nestor Espenilla Jr. said the Monetary Board had agreed to allow deserving rural banks to accept foreign currency deposits and match these liabilities by lending in foreign currencies.

FCDUs, considered the country's secondary layer of foreign exchange reserves, were in the past exclusively handled by big commercial banks. In 2004, the BSP had allowed thrift banks to handle FCDUs.

By allowing rural banks—the smallest sub sector in the banking system—to also handle FCDUs, the BSP hopes the formal channel will be able to capture the bulk of the OFW remittances sent to the countryside.

Espenilla said rural banks were keen on offering FCDU services. But to obtain an FCDU license, Espenilla said the rural bank must pass stringent requirements, including the minimum capitalization of P20 million.

He noted that even among thrift banks, only 24 out of 84 were currently licensed by the BSP to handle FCDU accounts.

There are at present more than 700 rural banks in the country.

The government earlier estimated that out of the total OFW remittances, about 25-30 percent or $2.5-$3 billion was being coursed through informal channels.

An Asian Development Bank study showed that about 38 percent of recipients in the Philippines prefer the informal method, primarily due to lower transaction costs.

But the country's remittance system has significantly improved, with banks now using state-of-the-art technology to lower the fees and charges and better compete with the informal couriers.

There are about eight million OFWs deployed abroad, of which three million are permanent residents.

Pleasant problems

No Free Lunch

Cielito F. Habito

WOULD YOU WORRY ABOUT OUR economy growing too fast? Would you fret if prices of goods and services kept going down? Would a continuously strengthening peso alarm you?

Given the Philippine economy's traditionally sluggish growth performance, averaging less than 4 percent in gross domestic product growth over the last 25 years, it seems unthinkable that we'd ever worry about GDP growing too fast.

Given the way our price increases have been progressively speeding up, with our 3-percent inflation rate in 2002 having more than doubled to 7.6 percent by the end of last year, price declines should be very welcome news indeed.

As for the peso, a steadily dropping peso-dollar exchange rate is the current order of the day, and we don't seem to be too sure whether we should be happy or unhappy about it.

Brakes on growth

We need not look too far to find a country with the pleasant problem of growing too fast for its comfort. China has been consciously trying to slow down its economic growth in the last two years.

The Chinese authorities wanted a GDP growth rate of 8.5 percent last year; to their dismay (!), they ended up with 9.9 percent. This coming year, they are more determined than ever to use whatever means necessary to keep economic growth in check.

Why would a country want to slow down its economic growth?

The worry among the Chinese is that their economy may be "overheating." Brisk demand for their products at home and abroad is beginning to stretch the capacity of their production sectors to the point of provoking dramatic price increases. And when their inflation rate goes up too rapidly, Chinese domestic citizens will be the first to suffer its consequences.

Their other worry is that their rapid growth is coming from too narrow a base and is not benefiting the rural population. Thus, the government is deliberately raising interest rates to dampen investment and consumption spending, thereby slowing down growth.

If they succeed, will this be good news for us? Probably not. Their rapid growth has so far been translating into a strong demand for our raw materials and intermediate input exports to them, such that we have been posting consistent trade surpluses with China in recent years. Our economy is actually benefiting from their rapid growth.

Inflation at last

Japan, for its part, is welcoming the news that its consumer prices are finally rising. That is, the inflation rate is now strongly positive, after having been negative for the last seven years. They actually had the pleasant problem of continuously dropping prices in recent years!

At the rate authorities are rejoicing over the recent inflation news, you'd think the inflation rate was a measure of economic health. Well, maybe so—but only in Japan. We all know inflation is bad news practically everywhere else.

So why is Japan so happy that its consumer prices are rising?

In Japan's unique context, it is a sign that the economy is finally growing. The negative inflation (that is, deflation) that it had been seeing over the last seven years was associated with recession, the result of not enough demand among the Japanese for their own goods and services.

Personal consumption and investment expenditures had been weak, leading to weak performance of the production sectors of the economy. The recent significant rise in consumer prices is taken to indicate that demand is finally rising, and that production is expanding at a rate that signals sustainable growth.

Is this good news for the Philippines? It is, indeed. With Japan consistently being one of the top two buyers of our exports, a growing Japanese economy translates into growing demand for our exports and faster expansion in our export industries.

Rising peso

We have our own "pleasant problem" at the moment. The continuing rise in the value of the peso, manifested in the dropping peso-dollar exchange rate, is generally seen as welcome news. But many, including Neda, are pointing out that it is also bad news.

Neda says too strong a peso would hurt our export sectors and ultimately the economy as a whole.

The BSP and others argue that exports never really surged when the peso depreciated in past years. They further argue that our exporters also benefit from a stronger peso inasmuch as our main exports—electronics and apparel, with both already making up about 75 percent of our total export earnings—are highly dependent on imported inputs that become cheaper with a stronger peso.

In other words, their domestic content is actually very thin, limited to assembly labor and hardly anything else.

But that's precisely the problem. A strong peso inhibits the growth of more primary exports with high domestic value-added content—the kind of exports that provide wider benefits to our people—and will keep the high import-content exports prominent in our export portfolio.

Rather than reduce our dependence on electronics and garments exports, their share in total exports has actually grown, and will keep growing under a strong peso scenario. This is what the BSP and other proponents of a strong peso are missing: In the end, it is net exports that count, not the gross export earnings.

That's why I say that the strengthening of the peso may look pleasant, but it still is a problem. *Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu.*

RLC wants to buy Iloilo airport

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ROBINSONS LAND CORP. OF THE GOKONGWEI family is keen on acquiring the 60-hectare airport in Mandurriao district in Iloilo, one of the state assets up for sale.

"RLC would be interested in participating in the bidding once the guidelines are finalized," RLC executive vice-president Frederick Go said.

RLC earlier acquired the government's Manila Gas property in Paco, Manila for P573 million through a public bidding.

"We are always on the lookout for pieces of property with potential for mixed use developments or those that would fit into any of our four core business units—malls, hotels, subdivisions and buildings," Go said.

RLC's acquisition plans are being supported by strong profits. From October to December, RLC's net income rose 28 percent to P419 million, from year-ago's P328 million.

In the first of RLC's fiscal year 2006, which ends on Sept. 30, gross revenue grew 38 percent to P1.72 billion from P1.25 billion in the previous year.

In its financial report filed with the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) showed that revenue from its commercial centers accounted for P872 million of total real estate revenue in the first quarter, up from P778.9 million in the same period last year.

RLC's high rise buildings division posted an 84-percent growth in in revenue to P526.7 million in the quarter ending December from P286.3 million last year.

Its hotel division posted gross revenue of P219.3 million in the first quarter, up from the year-ago's P116.8 million.

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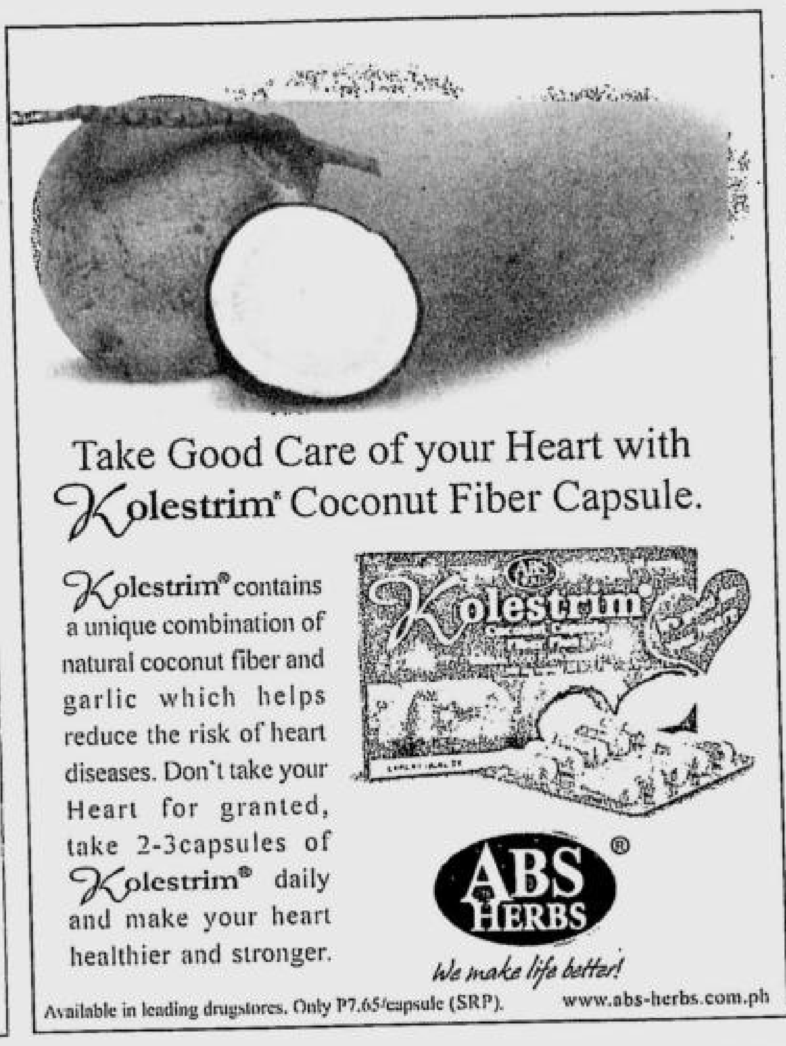

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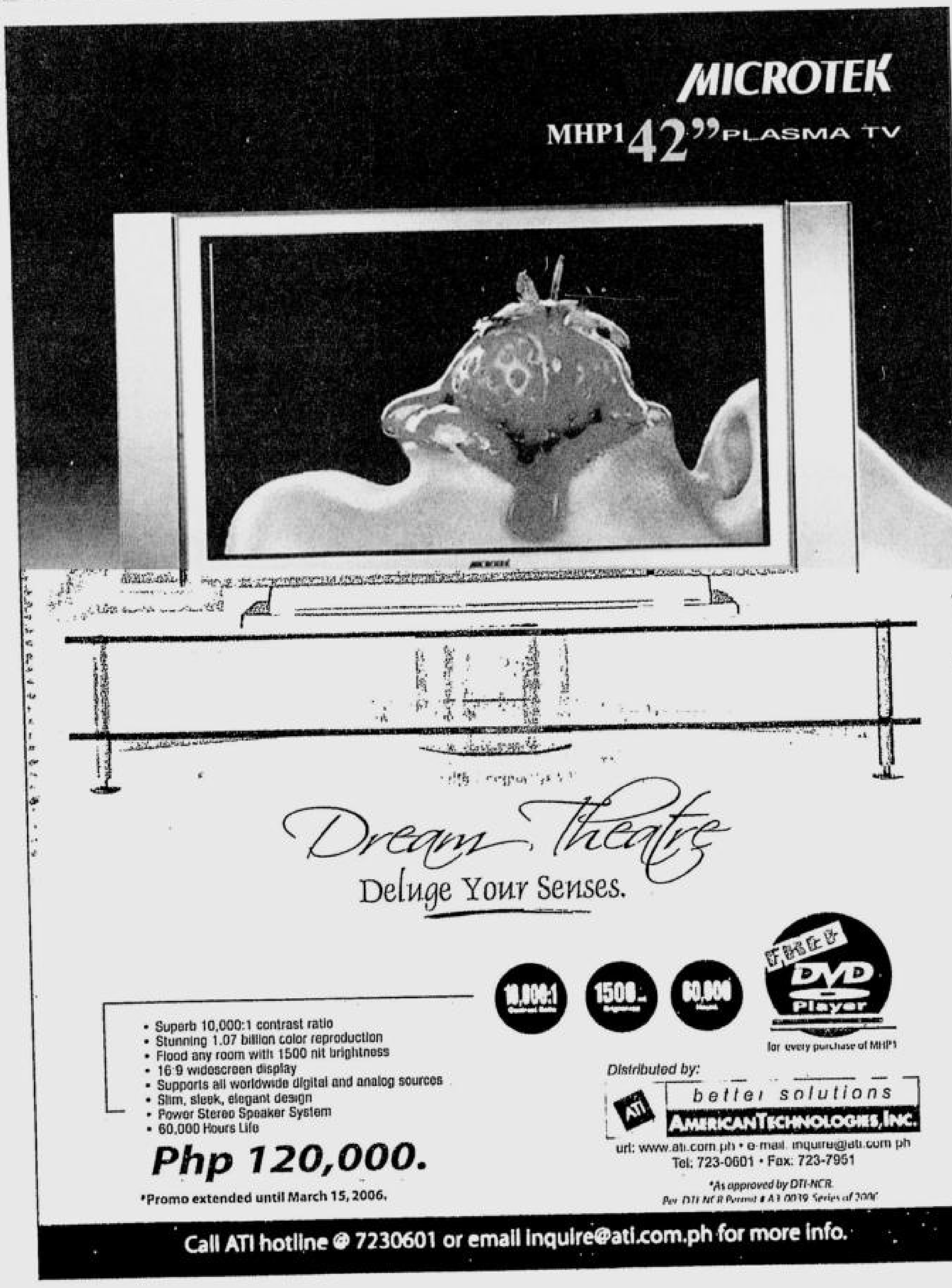

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Measures to ease VAT reform impact seen to result in ₱21.5-B loss for gov't

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE lost a total of P21.5 billion in potential revenue collection this year after it granted several relief measures to mitigate the impact of the VAT Reform law.

According to DOF estimates, the reduction of tariff on oil imports and the lifting of the excise tax on these products would result in the biggest revenue loss amounting to P13.55 billion.

Malacañang issued Executive Order No. 440 last year, reducing the tariff on most oil products from 5 to 3 percent, while bringing down to zero the duty on liquefied petroleum gas.

Michelle V. Remo

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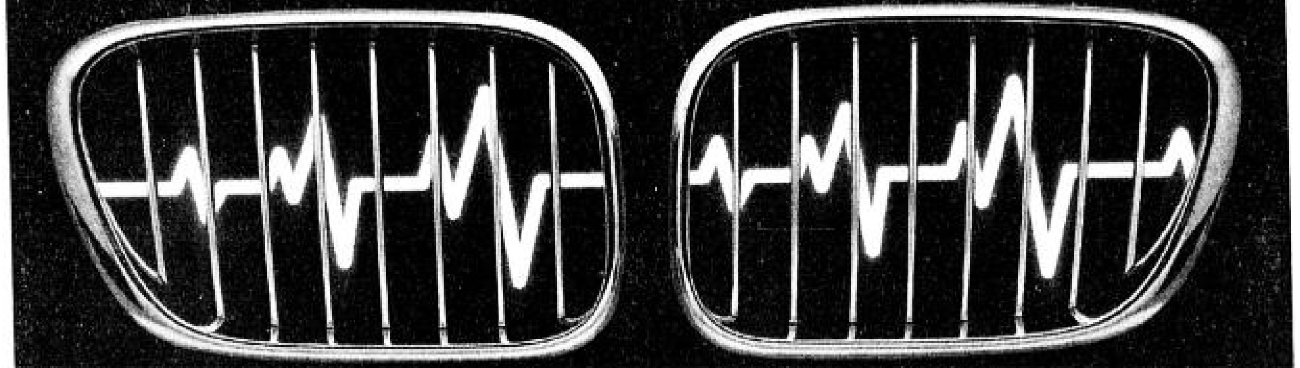

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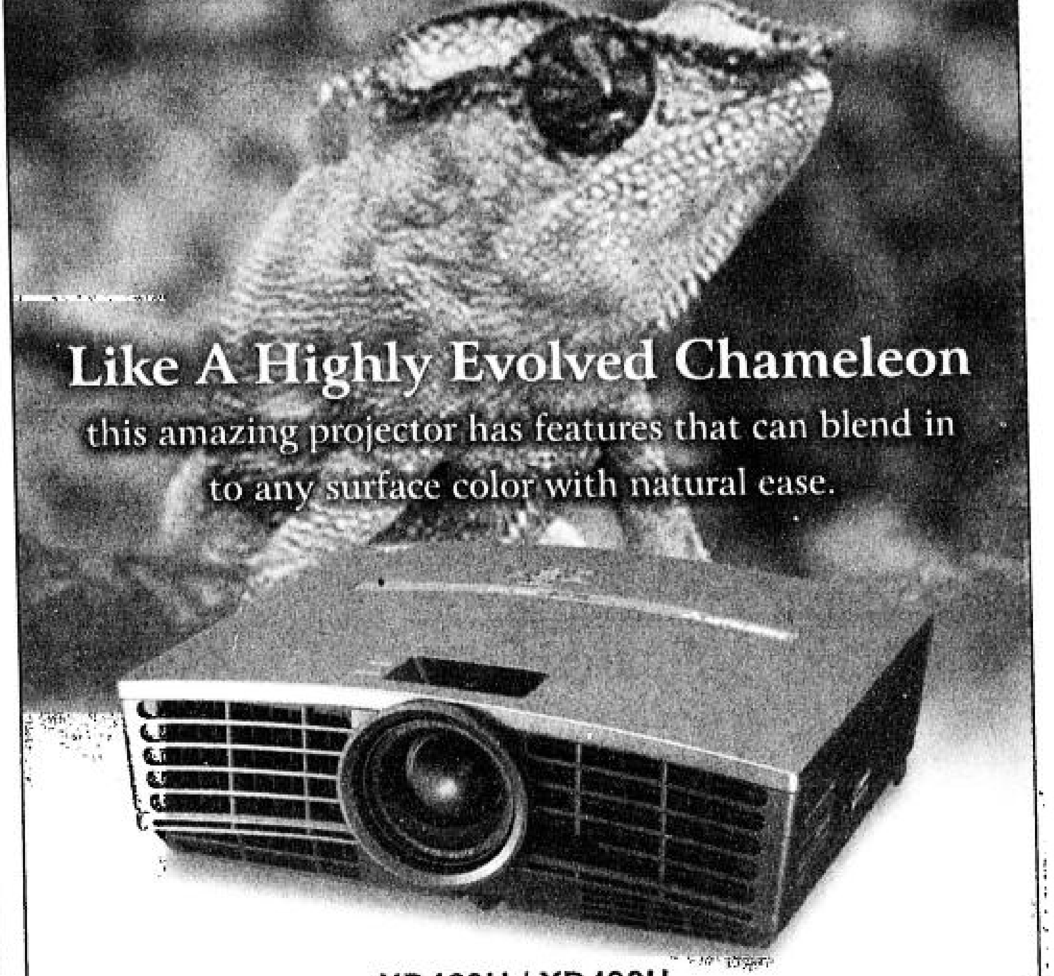

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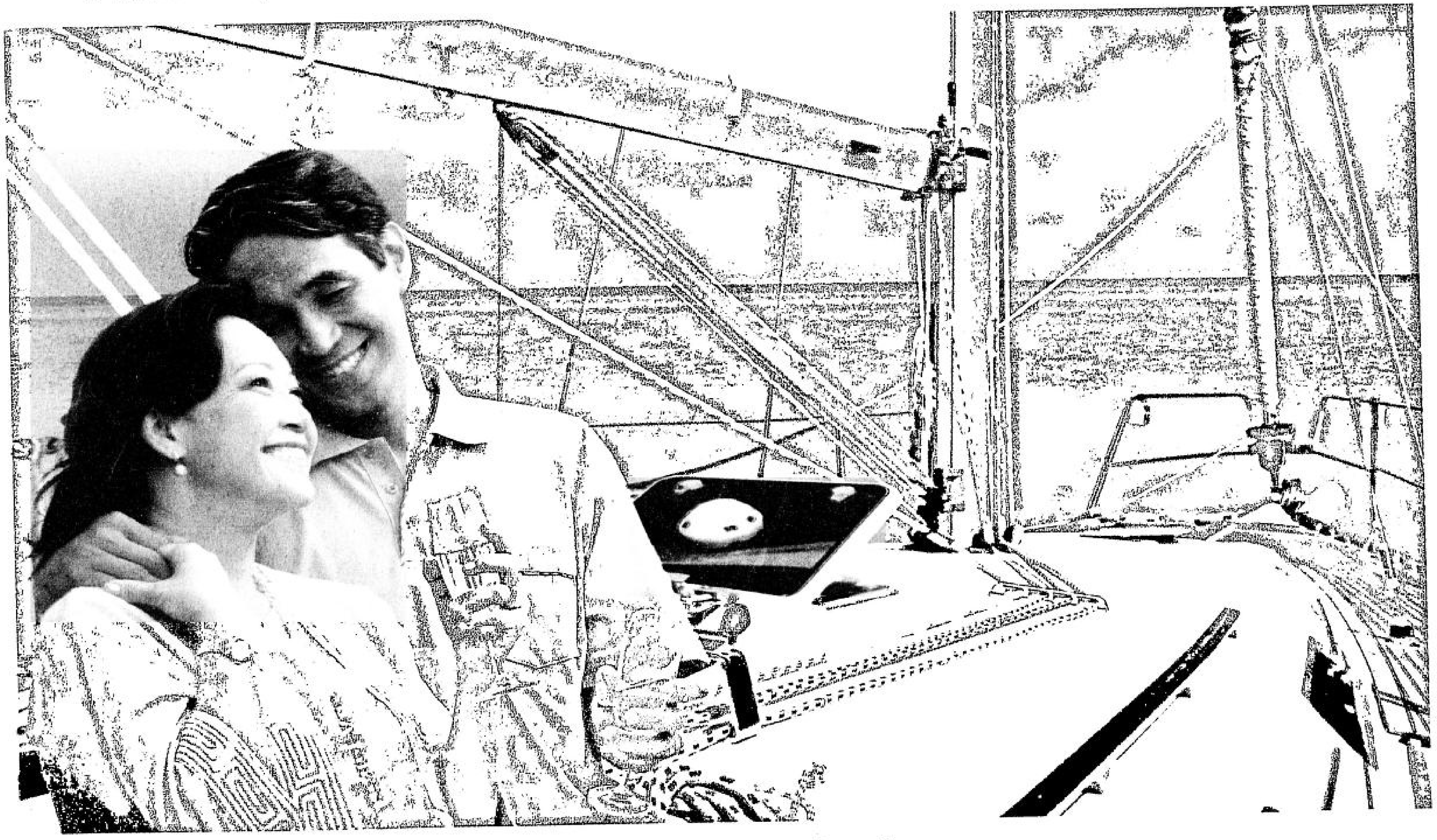

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Coal-to-fuels facility attracts investors

By Abigail L. Ho

AMERICAN FIRM HEADWAters Technology Innovation Group Inc. (HTIG) and local company H&WB Corp. are in talks with four investor groups for the funding of the proposed $2.8-billion coal-to-fuels facility in the Philippines.

Antonio Ver, president of H&WB Corp., told the INQUIRER that these four groups-two American, one Chinese and one European-were keen on initially investing in the development of the project and on taking an equity stake in it later.

He, however, declined to name the groups pending the completion of the talks.

The project proponents submitted on March 3 to the Department of Energy the final report on the initial evaluation of the project.

Ver said the project developers could now complete their project development plan and proceed with the feasibility study and the project's basic engineering design.

"The project scope, detailed coal characterization, product yields and the overall plan for the coal liquefaction facility will be developed during the study," he said.

The initial evaluation of the project showed that proven commercial technologies are available to convert Philippine coal into transportation fuels and power.

Further drop in banks' NPLs seen

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BAD LOANS-TO-TOTAL LOANS RATIO of local commercial banks further eased to 8.43 percent as of end-January from 8.51 percent in end-2005, as the expansion in loan portfolio outpaced the rise in soured loans, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said.

With Congress likely to revive the Special Purpose Vehicle Act, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the sector's non-performing loan (NPL) ratio would further slow down to 6.5 percent. He said about P100 billion more in bad assets could be unloaded using the SPV framework.

While the level is now on an eight-year low, the NPL ratio in January was still higher than the 4 percent level seen before the Asian currency turmoil in 1997.

The sector's NPL ratio peaked at 18.81 percent in October 2001. The level went down steadily since last year as banks unloaded their NPLs through special purpose vehicles.

The SPV law allowed banks to clean up about P95 billion in bad assets before it expired April last year. The Law waived some of the taxes and reduced fees usually collected in the sale or transfer of assets—including the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and VAT (expanded value added tax). It also reduced the registration/transfer fees by 50 percent.

For the month of January, the BSP reported that the commercial banking sector's total loan portfolio had expanded by 1.7 percent, which more than offset the 0.8 percent rise in NPLs.

In nominal terms, the sector's NPLs amounted to P161.12 billion as of end-January, up from P159.81 billion a month ago.

Net of inter-bank loans, the NPL ratio also stood better at 10.35 percent from 10.38 percent a month ago.

The ratio of restructured loans barely moved at 5.26 percent from a month ago's 5.25 percent of total loans. The restructured loans that turned sour again rose by 3.5 percent, leading to a 0.72 percentage rise in non-performing restructured loans to 49.42 percent.

The sector's real and other properties owned and acquired as a ratio of gross assets inched up to 4.88 percent from 4.86 percent as of end-December.

British firm sets up HQ in Manila

THE MABEY GROUP OF UK, A LEADING manufacturer of steel bridging, is setting up its Asia Pacific headquarters in Fort Bonifacio Global City, Taguig.

Group chair David Mabey announced this saying the move reflected the group's strong confidence in the strong potential for growth and continued economic stability of the Philippines.

The cornerstone for the Mabey Centre is scheduled to be laid in ceremonies to be held on June 18 at the Bonifacio Triangle, in the Global City. The Centre, a joint venture between The Mabey Group and affiliate WinAce Holdings Philippines, will house the Group's regional offices and that of WinSource Solutions Inc., its information technology (IT) and business process outsourcing (BPO) affiliate in the Philippines.

Mabey & Johnson Ltd. is the sole British manufacturer of prefabricated modular steel bridges that employs the latest technology in steel bridge manufacturing.

Under a bilateral agreement between the governments of the UK and the Philippines, Mabey has built around 1,300 modular steel bridges for the President's Bridge Program throughout the Philippines.

Mabey said his group's response to President Arroyo's call for foreign investments reflected its belief that even under the present political climate, the economic stability of the Philippines is not unduly disturbed.

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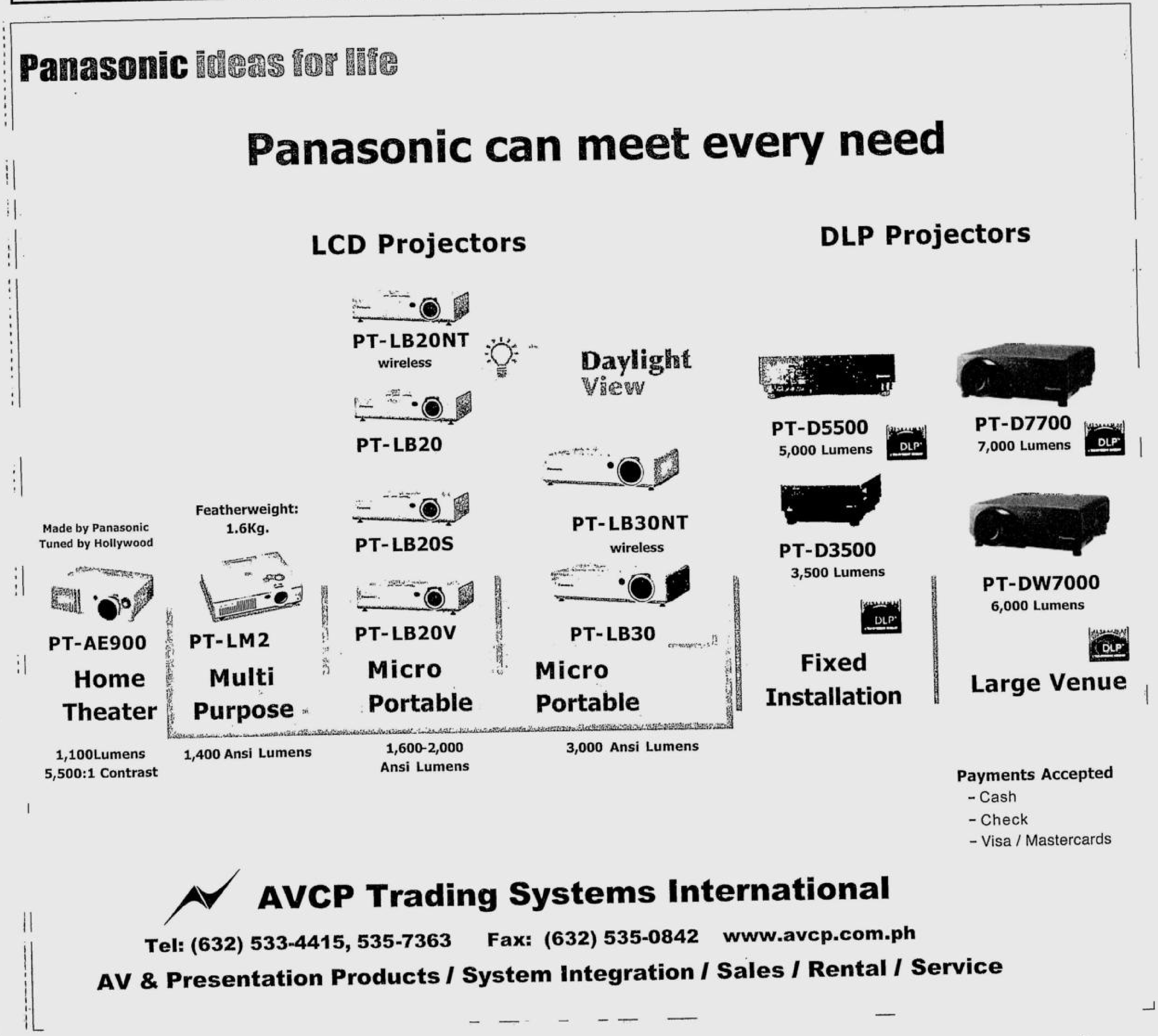

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Winston's gambit

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

WINSTON GARCIA HAS RATCHETED up the bidding war for the control of Equitable PCIBank.

According to the pro-Garcia grapevine, the GSIS chief met Henry "Big Boy" Sy Jr. in a Makati hotel last week to relay a P95/share buy-offer for the Sy family's estimated 34-percent shareholdings in Equitable PCIBank.

The alleged offer, coming from an undisclosed buyer, is also conditioned on the Government Service Insurance System simultaneously selling out its 12.4-percent bank stake along with the Sys.

Garcia declined to comment when asked about the reported meeting and the alleged offer, except to say, "I will make the proper disclosure at the proper time."

It was not clear why Garcia chose to meet with Big Boy instead of his older sister, Teresita Sy, who, like Garcia, is a vice chair of Equitable PCIBank.

Apparently, it was a part of the strategy to work on the male brothers, who all sit on the Chinabank board, and even the taipan himself, Henry Sr., to isolate Teresita, the headstrong first born.

The P95 figure, incidentally, represents a P3 premium from the P92/share that GSIS is currently soliciting for its stake.

It also represents a P39 premium from the effective P56/share merger valuation that the Sys' Banco de Oro has offered to the rest of Equitable PCIBank shareholders, prior to the reescalation of the bidding war.

Equitable PCIBank closed Friday at P64.50. At P95/share, the Sy stake in Equitable PCIBank is worth nearly P18 billion; the GSIS block, another P9 billion.

According to the grapevine, the buyout offer relayed by Garcia proposes an immediate 10-percent downpayment upon acceptance, with the balance payable in five months in equal monthly installments.

Double your salary

WHAT is the surest way to double your money in just two years? RP bonds? Stock market? *Lugaw* business? Would you believe, working for Ayala Land?

The combined compensation of the 14 top officers of the Zobel mall and housing developer led by president Jaime Ayala more than doubled this year from what the group had received in 2004.

From P92.12 million two years ago, Ayala (who is not related to the Zobels) and the rest of senior management expect this year to receive P207.19 million in wages, bonuses and stock options.

The doubling of the executive compensation comes on the back of a record P3.62 billion in net income the premiere land developer posted in 2005 and P2.99 billion in 2004.

In contrast, SM Prime Holdings, which Ayala Land considers as its chief mall competitor, looks like underpaying its top officers in relation to SM Prime's higher profitability than Ayala Land's.

This year, SM Prime Holdings president, Hans Sy, and four other top officers will receive about P36.56 million in all, against a backdrop of P5.25-billion net income for 2005.

PAL cheaper in HK

CEBU Pacific may be undercutting Philippine Airlines in some domestic destinations, but it is the other way around in Hong Kong this time of the year.

Hong Kong travel agents are quoting HK$2,323 (about $298) for a roundtrip Cebu Pacific fare to Manila, valid up to the end of the month.

A similar economy-class passage by PAL, in contrast, is being quoted at HK $2,120 (about $272).

Apparently, there is an influx of HK-based Pinoy parents every March who wish to attend the graduation rites of their children left schooling in the mother country.

By April, when the rush shall have subsided, the HK-Manila fare returns to the HK$1,000 ($128) level.

Heard through the grapevine

AMBASSADOR Amable Aguiluz V is grumbling about a fellow political appointee in the foreign service, Jose "Joey" Antonio.

It seems that Antonio's Century Properties has acquired the inside track on the failed International School bidding, edging out Aguiluz's AMA Group, despite Antonio's supposed shallower pockets.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Neda chief backs franchise tax on telcos

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC and Development Authority has suggested that the government impose an additional tax measure, perhaps imposing a franchise tax on telecommunication companies, to raise funds needed to enhance the delivery of basic services, especially on education.

Neda Director General Romulo Neri noted that proceeds from recently implemented measures like the VAT Reform law, which raised the tax rate to 12 percent from 10, would be used largely to reduce the budget deficit.

If the government wanted to better address problems on the delivery of educational services, such as lack of classrooms and teachers, then it should allocate more funds for these, he said.

Since more than a third of the government's annual budget is allotted for debt servicing, some sectors have raised the concern that the lesser priority given to education has continually led to its declining quality.

Under the government's fiscal program for 2006, only 30 percent of the P75 billion in expected additional revenues from the new VAT law will be used to increase spending on infrastructure, education and other services. The bulk will be used to cut the deficit and help put the fiscal house in order.

However, Neri said there was no pressing need to impose another tax measure because existing ones were already enough to address the urgent agenda of lowering the budget deficit.

But Neri said the government could choose to impose a new tax measure to be more aggressive in achieving the goal of improving the quality of education and the delivery of other basic services.

BCDA profit up 2.7%

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BASES CONVERSION DEVELOPMENT Authority (BCDA) reported a 2.7-percent increase in earnings from its assets in former military camps in Metro Manila to P915 million in 2005 from P891 million in 2004.

BCDA documents showed that about P529 million came from the contracted sale of assets in the former Self Reliance and Development Complex (SRDP) Proper, the Logistics Command (Logcom) Area and Heritage Park in Fort Bonifacio as well as from Villamor Gateway in Villamor Air Base and Camp Bago Bantay in Quezon City.

The balance came from recurring revenues amounting to P386 million from lease and joint venture partnerships in Ayala Lot B (Serendra), Ayala Lot C (Market! Market!), Lawton Parkway (McKinley Hills) and Institutional Area in Fort Bonifacio.

BCDA president and chief executive Narciso Abaya said the agency's activities under its assets disposition program were focused on two main thrusts in 2005—to optimize the development and enhance revenue-generation from (former) Metro Manila camps.

"(At the forefront of these efforts) are the ongoing developments within Bonifacio Global City," Abaya said. "One project is the replanning and reconfiguration of the City Center."

"This will make the district more efficient and marketable," he said. "We are optimistic it will complete the transformation of Bonifacio Global City as the next premiere business and commercial district in the country."

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Exportbank grand draw awards P1M

EXPORT AND INDUSTRY BANK (Exportbank) will be giving away more than P1 million as it holds its 3rd preliminary draw and the grand draw of the "Deposito Mo, P1-Million ang Panalo" Raffle Promo Part 2. A total of 34 winners will be drawn in this raffle event with P1 million cash to be given to the lucky 1st prize winner in the grand draw to be held on March 15 at the lower lobby hall, Exportbank Plaza, Makati City.

The "Deposito Mo, P1-Million ang Panalo" Raffle Promo Part 2 was launched in June 2005 following the success of Exportbank's very first deposit generation drive initiated in 2004.

The "Deposito Mo, P1-Million ang Panalo" Raffle Promo Part 2 held the 1st and the 2nd preliminary draws Sept. 15 and Dec. 15, respectively, under the supervision of Ferdinand Manfoste, Assistant Regional Director of the Department of Trade and Industry, National Capital Region. Cash prizes were given away to 34 lucky depositors from Luzon, Metro Manila, Visayas and Mindanao.

CLASS '55 ASSUMPTION ILOILO GOLDEN JUBILEE

The high school class 1955 of Assumption, Iloilo City recently celebrated a Thanksgiving Mass Feb. 5 to celebrate its golden jubilee. Shown, first row, from left, are Mercedes Yulo, Cecille Villanueva-Layson, Victoria Guanzon-Ledesma, Marilou Jalandoni-Catedral, Marilen Yusay-Rivera, Sr. Estela Infante, Mother Cristina A. Ledesma (Mistress of Class), Isabel Gustilo-Quimpo, Victoria Tayengco-Maisog, Eloisa Hervas, Sonia Bayona-Barza, Nilda Villanueva-Laoang. Second row, from left, are Cecile Tirol-Javelosa, Dalen Diez-Tapiador, Belma Locsin-Sanchez, Cecille Montinola-Gamboa, Isabel Gamboa-Trebol, Josette Nograles-Oredina, Lulu Ladrido-Ignacio, Victoria Coruña-Togle, Ruby Griño-Florendo, and Ising Dacudao-Roque.

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This is the only whitening cream in the market that can do wonders in just seven days. It moisturizes the skin and eliminates pimple marks, blackheads, freckles and other skin impurities.

Melika Magic Whitening products are BFAD approved and available at all Mercury Drug outlets, leading supermarkets and drug stores nationwide. They are distributed by Melika Pharmaceutical and Medical Inc. For more details, call 0919-8682135, 0921-4702681, or 435-4881.

Instant long hair, sans the wait

WE MAY NOT REALIZE IT, BUT WE FRET over our hair at one time or another, whether it's because of falling hair or just a haircut gone wrong. Even more so nowadays, when long locks seem to be the "in" thing.

Hairwear Creative Hair Systems recently introduced hair extensions using the "micro-ring" and "extenda-tube" systems to add length, volume and even color to your hair.

For those who are concerned that hair extensions can be messy or may cause damage to their natural hair, there is no need to worry according to Hairwear owner Frannie Villanueva.

Pre-bonded human hair strands are secured a fourth of an inch from the scalp with micro-rings or extenda-tubes without using heat and glue. Et voila! There are no messy synthetic attachments that could damage your natural hair. "The extensions blend well with your own hair and may be washed, conditioned, blow-dried, ironed or even curled with your own mane," Villanueva added.

Hairwear offers an entire range of hair care treatments, services and products. Hairwear can be found at the ground floor, Francisco Building, Timog Avenue, Quezon City. For inquiries, call 414-5957 or 376-2427 or log on to www.hair-wear.com.

UNILAB'S ALAXAN NOW EVEN MORE AFFORDABLE

United Laboratories Inc (Unilab), the country's largest and leading pharmaceutical company, once again tapped the 'People's Champion' Manny 'Pacman' Pacquiao as chief endorser of Alaxan, the country's long-established leading pain reliever trusted by Filipinos for the relief of their body pains. Consistent with its mission to provide Filipinos with affordable quality healthcare, Unilab launched Alaxan's 'Presyo sa Bayan' campaign, making Alaxan even more affordable. Alaxan Tablet is now priced at P6 and Alaxan FR Capsule at P7.65 suggested retail prices. Shown during the contract signing are (from left) Catherine Ludovice (AVP for somatics category), Che-che Soberano-Kau (product manager for Alaxan), Jun Vivar (corporate VP of Unilab consumer health), Manny Pacquiao, Jinkee Pacquiao, Christine Jacinto (product associate for Alaxan), Christiah Gatchalian (administrative assistant for somatics), and Jazmin Hernandez (product associate for Alaxan).

Colgate's P1-million shopping spree

COLGATE FRESH CONFIDENCE, the only toothpaste with Cooling Crystals, will launch its latest promo "Colgate Fresh Confidence with Cooling Crystals Makeover Shopping Spree" today, 3 p.m. at the Glorietta Activity Center, Glorietta Mall, Ayala Center, Makati City. Colgate Fresh Confidence with Cooling Crystals will be giving out P100,000 each or P1 million worth of shopping money to 10 lucky winners through this exciting promo. The winners will also get a chance to go shopping with Jay-R and Shaina Magdayao for a day at the Glorietta Mall in Makati City. The P100,000 prize will be preloaded in eGC to be used in any eGC-accredited Ayala Mall establishments nationwide. Colgate-Palmolive will shoulder all hotel accommodations and travel expenses. Colgate Fresh Confidence with Cooling Crystals products are available in 150 ml, 100 ml and 50 ml cartons and 10 ml sachets. Promo period will run until Mar. 31. To join, consumers must send any single product carton of Colgate Fresh Confidence with Cooling Crystals or three sachets with their contact details enclosed in an envelope and drop it in drop boxes at any LBC branch nationwide. Raffle draw will be held on April 7. Winners will be notified via phone call and registered mail. See posters and print ads for more information and details.

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION
Citystate Centre, 709 Shaw Boulevard, Pasig City
Healthline 637-9999 www.philhealth.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
No. 2006-009 g

RE-BIDDING FOR THE LEASE OF ADDITIONAL WAREHOUSE (FOR THE USE OF MOTOR POOL AND SUPPLY UNITS)

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), through the Corporate Operating Budget (COB) 2006, intends to apply the sum of **PhP4,320,000.00** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Lease for two (2) years of Additional Warehouse for the use of the Motor Pool and Supply Units. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

PhilHealth now invites Bids from eligible Bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Bidding for the Lease of Additional Warehouse for the use of the Motor Pool and Supply Units, with the following specifications:

1. **Location**

The location of the warehouse shall be within one (1) kilometer radius from the Citystate Centre. The area must not be subject to flooding.

2. **Basic Requirements**

2.1. **Floor Area** : 1,000 sq.m. to 1,200 sq.m. it may be a single unit, or two (2) separate units with a total area of 1,000 sq.m. to 1,200 sq.m
2.2. **Flooring** : Concrete Finish
2.3. **Electricity** : With Power supply and serviceable electrical lighting
2.4. **Water Supply & Drainage System** : With Water supply and existing/working drainage system
2.5. **Office Space** : With existing office space (enclosed structure)

3. **Other Conditions**

3.1. Free moving-in for a period of thirty (30) days.
3.2. Major repair shall be undertaken by the lessor.
3.3. Title must be free from liens and encumbrances.
3.4. Lessor guarantees peaceful, continued and uninterrupted use of the premises, with full beneficial use of the leased premises.
3.5. Repair and washing of vehicles shall be allowed at least in the one-half portion of the warehouse.
3.6. The lessor shall perform the following:
3.6.1. Termite Control once a year
3.6.2. Pest and Rodent Control every three (3) months

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of the Republic Act 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino Citizens/Sole Proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws of regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino Citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 and subject to Commonwealth Act 138. Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such after the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the **Office of the Secretariat for the Bids and Awards Committees (OSBAC)** in the Central Office of PhilHealth, Room 1107, 11th floor Citystate Centre, 709 Shaw Blvd., Pasig City, and inspect the Bidding Documents from **8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from March 15 to 29, 2006 at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of **PhP3,000.00** cash. The prospective Bidder or his authorized representative shall receive the Bidding Documents personally.

PhilHealth will hold a **Pre-Bid Conference** open to all interested parties on **March 31, 2006 at 10:30 a.m.** at the **OSBAC Conference Room** (Rm. 1106), PhilHealth Central Office, 11th floor Citystate Centre, 709 Shaw Blvd., Brgy. Oranbo, Pasig City.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the **OSBAC Conference Room on or before April 17, 2006, 10:30 a.m.** The official time shall be based on the wall clock located at the **OSBAC Conference Room.** Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Bid opening shall be on April 17, 2006, 10:30 a.m. at OSBAC Conference Room. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.

PhilHealth shall require the prospective bidders to submit copy of contracts within the relevant period of CY 2004 and CY 2005 whether ongoing, completed or awarded but not yet started.

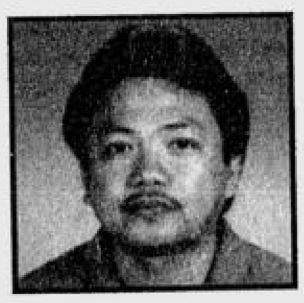
PhilHealth reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Office of the Secretariat for the Bids and Awards Committees in the Central Office
Mr. Joseph O. Vergara
Rm. 1107, 11th Floor Citystate Centre
709 Shaw Blvd, Brgy. Oranbo, Pasig City
Tel. (02) 637-9999 locals 1128, 1130 and 1830
E-mail add: osbac@philhealth.gov.ph
Facsimile No. 637-4735
www.philhealth.gov.ph

(Sgd.) Atty. VALENTIN C. GUANIO
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee for Goods and Services

(PDI March 13 & 20 2006)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC



This is to inform the public that **NOMERIANO M. ORTIZ** whose picture appears herein is no longer connected with **DONG-AH TUBE CORP.** effective February 10, 2006 and that any transaction entered into by him on behalf of **DONG-AH TUBE CORPORATION** after the said date shall not be honored by the company.

(PDI – March 13, 2006)

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF CAPIZ
City of Roxas, Province of Capiz
(036) 6210-036 Local 254
Fax No.: (036) 6210-036 Local 158
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Provincial Government of Capiz thru its BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE invites interested suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

Name of Contract: Materials use for the concreting of Capiz-Iloilo Road, Brgy. Sta. Cruz, Ivisan Road Section
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC): P4,218,060
Source of Fund: Trust Fund

1.	Portland Cement (Type-Ip)	2,1904	bags
2.	Coco Lumber 2'3"x10"	8	pcs
3.	Asstd. C W. Nails	20 ½	kls
4.	12mm x 6.0 RSB	100	pcs
5.	16mm x 6.0 RSB	450	pcs
6.	Blown Asphalt	2	drums
7.	Flat Bar 3"/16 x 2 x 6m	2	drums
8.	Laminated Sack	50	l.n.m
9.	#16 Tie Wire	50	kgs
10.	1'x2'x10" S4 a lumber	100	pcs
11.	White Reflectorized Paint	5	pails
12.	Yellow Reflectorized Paint	1	pail

BAC Activities	Schedule
1. Submission of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application of Eligibility	April 3-7, 2006
2. Issuance of Bid documents	April 10-20, 2006
3. Pre-Bid Conference	April 17, 2006
4. Opening of Bids	April 21, 2006

1 In order to qualify for publication in the public bidding, bidders should conform to all eligibility requirements as prescribed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Republic Act 9184.
2. The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility forms at Provincial General Services Office, Provincial Capitol, Roxas City upon their submission of a LOI, and upon their payment of prescribed non-refundable fee of PESOS: Two Thousand Pesos (P2,000.00).
3. Bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the same address.
4. Bidders shall drop their duly accomplished technical and financial proposals in two separate envelopes in the bid boxes before the deadline of submission of bids, if they have not earlier pre-qualified.
5. All Bids must be accomplished by a bid security in a form of cash and must be delivered to the PGSO on or before the bid closing date
6. BAC Committee assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.
7, BAC Committee reserves the right to reject any and all bid proposals, or declare the bidding a failure or not to award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) **G. ANTONIO ARBIS**
Chairman

(PDI - March 13, 2006)

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Date : March 13, 2006
Loan No. : CALYON
Contract No.: Sp05.MBTBP.Mi-0060

1. The ***National Power Corporation (NPC)*** has received a loan from the ***Buyer's Credit Facility arranged by CALYON through a Master Credit Arrangement*** for ***Maramag-Bunawan Project*** and it is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan will be applied to eligible payments under the contract ***Survey, Design, Supply of Materials/Equipment and Erection/Installation and Commissioning of Maramag-Bunawan 230kV Transmission Backbone Project.***
Bidder shall be from eligible source country of Calyon Buyer's Credit Facility only (United States, Austria, Belgium, England, Denmark, South Korea, Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland).
2. The ***National Transmission Corporation (TRANSCO)*** administering the implementation of the said project, now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the:
Survey, Design, Supply of Materials/Equipment and Erection/Installation and Commissioning of Maramag–Bunawan 230kV Transmission Backbone Project.
3. Bidders may obtain further information from and inspect and acquire the bidding documents of the ***Office of the Manager, Bids and Contracts Management Department, Ground Floor, Power Center, National Transmission Corporation, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City, Metro Manila, Telephone No.: 981-2212, 981-22-13, 981-4652; Telefax No.: 921-23-08***
4. A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by interested eligible bidders starting March 23, 2006 upon submission of a written application to the above office, and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of ***Forty Thousand Pesos (PHP 40,000.00).***
5. A two-envelope bidding procedure will be adopted. Bidders are to submit simultaneously two (2)-sealed envelopes, one (1) containing the technical proposal and one (1) containing the price proposal. Initially only the technical proposals will be opened. Technical proposals which are submitted by non qualified bidders or which are not substantially responsive will be rejected. The substantially responsive technical proposals that have been submitted by qualified bidders are discussed with the bidders and the bidders are requested for full compliance. The bidders may or may not submit a supplementary price proposal, which contain the changes in price resulting from the discussed changes in the technical proposals. The original price proposal and the supplementary price proposal are opened simultaneously in public.
6. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of:
Two Hundred Eighteen Thousand One Hundred Forty Seven US Dollars (US$218,147.00)
The bid security must be included in the technical proposal.
Pre-bid Conference shall be conducted on April 27, 2006.
The deadline for the submission of bids will be on June 7, 2006 at 1:30 P.M. at the aforementioned address. Late submission will be rejected.
7. The technical proposals together with the bid security will be opened immediately thereafter in the presence of bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
8. The price proposals will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the time and date and at the address to be advised by the Employer after approval of the evaluation of the technical proposals.
9. The total contract duration for the project is **480 calendar days.**
10. TRANSCO reserves the right to reject any or all Bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
11. All communications shall be addressed to the Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee at aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) GUILLERMO R. REDOBLADO
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - March 13, 20 & 27, 2006)

BSP says peso . . .

From page B1

to look back to 2000 when the country's economic growth and current accounts were favorable and the unemployment rate relatively low, the country's REER today would be comparable.

"If you compute for the nominal exchange rate, it's about 51:$1, so if the peso is doing at 51.50, that's what (Tetangco) explains as undervalued," Guinigundo said.

Meanwhile, UBS Investment Research agreed that the peso's recent gains could be sustainable due to the large and rapidly growing remittances from overseas Filipino workers that support the external payments position.

"However, political noise is likely to keep appreciation pressure in check, in particular as we approach June, when renewed impeachment proceedings against President Arroyo could be launched," UBS economist Christa Janjic said in a commentary issued last March 3.

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BUSINESS *Monday*

Business Features Editor **Margie Quimpo-Espino**

Strong peso, weak peso,

wherefore art thou, Amando?

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

WASN'T IT JUST EIGHT MONTHS ago when pundits projected the peso making a free fall to the 60 to the dollar level?

Since hitting an all-time low of P56.45: $1, the peso is now edging closer to the 50 to the dollar mark, which President Macapagal-Arroyo herself is claiming to be the natural level of the local currency.

But her economic strategist, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, last week claimed that having a strong peso might not be conducive to economic growth and that monetary authorities should start stepping into the market.

The move to intervene or not to intervene falls on Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco. This forum weighs in on what the pros think.

Strong outweighs weak

"I think that exporters should have benefited by now from our weak peso since the Asian financial crisis with their windfall profits. Now that the tide has turned, they should not cry out for government intervention because we have lots of exports which are also dependent on imported raw materials. The advantages of a strong peso still outweigh a weak peso because it leads to lower debt servicing and reduces our import costs including power and fuel."

-Jesus Arranza, president, Federation of Philippine Industries

OFWs' interest

DIZON

"I understand why the BSP is reluctant to intervene in the foreign exchange market. But on the other hand, how can the interest of the majority of OFWs who remit on the average $200 a month be protected? The peso's appreciation (from P56 to P51 to the dollar) has reduced by roughly P1,000 the purchasing power of their families here and coupled with price increases due to inflation and e-VAT. So how can they make ends meet?"

-Francisco Dizon, former Philippine National Bank chair

Stick to BSP line

"I think you have to stick to the BSP party line that peso rate is determined by market forces but only managing level of volatility. You can say strong peso is good and bad but the BSP must not intervene. Romy (Neri) is out of line to publicly say what he did because it contradicts the BSP policy in public pronouncements. If government intervenes to keep peso above P50 [$1], it can also intervene to support weak peso."

-Jose Isidro N. Camacho, former Finance Secretary

Exporters hardest hit

"At 53 to the dollar, the peso is still okay. But at 51, most of us are losing money because we can't adjust our prices anymore without losing out our orders to other countries. Unfortunately, the hardest hit are our indigenous exporters like furniture, gift and housewares that we want to develop because they use local materials. We think the BSP has weighed all things and looked at their policy to determine whether a strong peso is indeed good for the economy as a whole."

-Sergio Ortiz-Luis, president, Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc.

Costs of goods did not go down

"It is true a strong peso reflects the success of an administration's economic policy. What is unfortunate, however, is that prices of commodities and utilities did not adjust lower as they should. On the other hand, exporters with locally-sourced materials find themselves uncompetitive. This is the reason China has resisted the pressure to appreciate the Yuan to protect and promote its exports to the world."

-Francis Chua, president, Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce Inc.

BSP should not intervene

"A BSP intervention would mean releasing too many pesos and putting inflation targeting policy at risk. Such policy move will only burn the BSP and create massive currency losses just to subsidize higher peso earnings for exporters. Government has no business choosing winners and losers much more setting prices because we have no competencies to make such determinations, no matter how well-intentioned. If we use comparative currency levels prior to the Asian financial crisis, the peso is just trailing the Indonesian rupiah at the tail end in their recovery as the rest of the regional currencies have recovered much of their pre-crisis values. At P51.50, the peso is still 51 percent below its pre-crisis value.

-Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, Arroyo economic adviser

Only if peso appreciates significantly

SY

"A BSP intervention has many ramifications that can't be answered with a simple yes or no. The BSP is correct in saying that any buying or selling is done to smoothen the movement of the peso. It was right in selling above P52 during the coup attempt and it did the right thing when it bough below P51. The fact that the BSP has not raised interest rates despite three hikes of 25 basis points by the US Federal Reserve is helping the peso appreciate less against the dollar. The BSP should only intervene if the peso appreciates significantly higher against our Asian neighbors without fundamental reasons."

-Wilson Sy, former Philippine Stock Exchange chair

Objectionable provisions to the Customs Brokers Act

MAPping the Future

Fernando Martin O. Peña and Romeo R. Sto. Tomas

A LAW WAS PASSED DURING the election of 2004 which will now affect our national economy.

What is RA 9280 or the Customs Brokers Act of 2004? The law intended to professionalize customs brokers. But somehow three provisions got in the law which will have a detrimental effect to trade and industry.

Under the new law the International Courier Companies, local logistics companies, lawyers, accountants and all companies including the Top 1000 corporations may not perform their import/exports in the manner they have done in the past.

The three provisions are:

SEC. 6. Scope of the Practice of Customs Brokers. Customs Broker Profession involves services consisting of consultation, preparation of customs requisite document for imports and exports, declaration of customs duties and taxes, preparation, signing, filing, lodging and processing of import and export entries; representing importers and exporters before any government agency and private entities in cases related to valuation and classification of imported articles and rendering of other professional services in matters relating to customs and tariff laws its procedures and practices.

A customs broker shall be considered in the practice of the profession if the nature and character of his/her employment in private enterprises requires professional knowledge in the field of customs and tariff administration. He/she is also deemed in the practice of custom Broker profession if he/she teaches customs and tariff administration subjects in any university, college or school duly recognized by the government.

Section 6 is objectionable because:

1. It will cause UNEMPLOYMENT of 20,000 customs clerks, customs representatives, processors, checkers, and affect about 200,000 people, as only customs brokers can prepare, file, lodge and process customs entries;

2. Experts, lawyers, consultants can no longer provide "consultation" and render other professional services on customs, tariff laws, procedures, practices. Actions of Bureau of Customs, Tariff Commission, and other government officers, as well as combinations of government and private individuals like the Customs and Valuation Team (CVT) will also be questioned if such officers and/or individuals are not customs brokers;

3. Lawyers can no longer represent their clients (importers and exporters) before the Bureau of Customs, Court of Tax Appeals, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, etc. (other government and private entities);

4. Teachers, experts, lawyers, if they are not customs brokers, cannot teach customs and tariff administration subjects.

SEC. 27. Acts Constituting the Practice of Customs Brokers Profession. Any single act or transaction embraced within the provision of Section 6 hereof shall constitute an act of engaging the practice of customs broker profession. Import and export entry declaration shall be signed only by customs broker under oath based on the covering documents submitted by the importers.

Section 27 is objectionable because:

1. The first sentence is redundant with Section 6, which already specifies what acts constitute the practice of customs broker profession. By reason thereof, there is no longer any necessity to restate that any single act or transaction "constitute an act of engaging in customs broker profession."

2. The 2nd sentence is not at all related to the title "Acts Constituting the Practice of Customs Brokers Profession" as it deals with documents, not acts, namely "import and export declarations";

3. The 2nd sentence is conflicting and contradictory in itself, as it first talks about "import and export entry" and then subsequently mentions only "documents submitted by importers";

4. The 2nd sentence is CONTRARY to the present practice wherein both the owner of the imported goods and the customs broker signs the import entry;

5. It is to the interest of the government to require the owner of the goods to sign the import entry to establish responsibility and/or liability of the importer for the goods.

6. Without the signature of the importer, incoming goods may be released without the owner's knowledge;

7. Goods may be imported by unscrupulous persons using the name of a legitimate importer without the latter's knowledge or consent;

8. The 2nd sentence violates existing laws, as well as the current procedures and practices wherein exporters can document their export and import shipments without need of customs brokers, as allowed by the Export Development Act, as well as the Automated Export Development Systems (AEDS), the procedures for Peza locators and the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Inc. (Seipi);

9. The 2nd sentence will be costly and time-consuming for all those already authorized to process their exports and imports without having to use customs brokers, as indicated in the immediately preceding paragraph.

SEC. 29. Prohibition Against Corporate Practice. The practice of customs broker is a professional service, admission to which shall be determined upon the basis of individual and personal qualifications. No firm, company, or association may be registered or licensed as such for the practice of customs broker profession.

Section 29 is objectionable because:

1. Large national and multi-national corporations object to Section 29 as they will not entrust their customs clearance requirements to single brokers, since single brokers cannot comply with bonding, security, financial, and transport requirements of large corporations (see attached Seipi's Position Paper);

2. Logistics and Multimodal Transport or "multimodalism," will suffer, as combined transport and delivery, one-stop shop transport, and total logistics services become impossible, to be replaced with time-consuming, unwieldy and increased costs attendant to segmented transport and delivery, resulting in an even more uncompetitive environment for the country.

3. Computerization initiatives already in place and electronic technological advancements will be nullified, as the interconnectivity of freight forwarding and customs brokerage corporations already established with the Bureau of Customs and other stakeholders, like banks and shipping lines, will be negated and abolished, like EDI links, on-line payments, computerized submission of inward foreign manifests, etc. The trade harmonization and electronic data interchange which require the transmission of information without rekeying in to avoid error and keep intact the integrity of data elements will be set for naught as customs brokers manually input their entries;

4. Likewise, the implementation of Republic Act 8792, otherwise known as the Electronic Commerce Act, will be seriously impaired. The law recognizes Electronic Commerce in Carriage of Goods, Electronic Documents and Data Messages, as well as Electronic Transactions in Government, all of which are now being pursued vigorously by freight forwarding and customs brokerage corporations as competitive tools in the globalization of trade and transport transactions.

5. The implementation of Section 29 will segment export and import procedures, and will imperil global initiatives and procedures on anti-terrorism, as systems in place like the Automated Manifest System (AMS), an international computer system which keeps track of shipments even before departure from ports of origin, will be negated by the manual intervention in the import and export process of individual customs brokers.

6. The implementation of Republic Act 9135, mandating the use of the WTO Customs Valuation System, also known as the Transaction Value Method, and the implementation of the Post Entry Audit and Record Keeping Systems, will be greatly prejudiced, as the records already existing with customs brokerage corporations, as well as their computerized record-keeping systems will be lost if the corporations are forced to close down by reason of the implementation of Section 29. Moreover, single brokers are presently not capable of providing the electronic and computerized requirements to implement RA 9135.

7. Section 29 in CONTRARY to GLOBAL BEST PRACTICE, as exemplified by the International Federation of Customs Brokers Associations (IFCBA), wherein members Australia, Canada, India, Indonesia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Poland, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and the United States of America, amongst many others, allow corporations to engage in customs brokerage business, with officers who are registered members of the customs broker profession. (The Philippines is a member of IFCBA.)

8. Section 29 will prejudice international parcel and courier services, leading to increased costs and delay in the releasing of parcels and documents;

9. It violates Article III, BILL OF RIGHTS, of the 1987 Constitution which provides:

"Section 1. No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of the laws."

10. There are more than 800 corporations formed for the purpose of engaging in Customs Brokerage Business pursuant to the provision of RA 1937, otherwise known as the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines (TCCP) passed in June 22, 1957, which provides:

"Sec 3401. No corporation, association or partnership shall engage in the customs brokerage business unless at least two (2) of the officers of the corporation or association, or at least two (2) members of such partnership have such certificate."

11. Section 29 of RA 9280 violates the right to due process and equal protection of the stockholders and employees of the said more than 800 corporations, since said Section 29 will arbitrarily and unreasonably deprive them of their livelihood;

12. The implementation of Section 29 will lead to large-scale unemployment, effectively causing the termination of thousands of jobs, with a greater number of people who would be negatively affected. Such would be to the detriment of the government's 10-Point Agenda, the first of which is to raise six to ten million (6,000,000 to 10,000,000) new jobs, as corporations engaging in customs brokerage will have to terminate the employment of their customs brokers and other employees, since said corporations can no longer engage in the customs brokerage business.

13. Even customs brokers will lose their jobs if the customs brokerage companies they are working in can no longer provide such services to their customers;

14. Customs brokers will also lose their opportunities to provide services and be compensated retainer fees as principal and alternate customs brokers for customs brokerage companies

15. Section 29 is also prejudicial to Customs Brokers as it prevents them from forming their own firms, partnerships or associations.

16. The new law may in our opinion lead ultimately lead to the increase in smuggling in the country as the culpability of the owner and corporations will now be veiled by a single individual. Where in the past brokerage corporations which were SEC registered and had assets that could be confiscated or litigated on during the investigation and filling of cases by the bureau of Customs now it will be more difficult to render culpability to a single individual custom broker working out on his own. Therefore, in the future all importers can always claim they were not a party to the smuggling as it appears that now only the individual customs broker controls the cargo. Lastly, will the top 1000 corporations of the Philippines allow a single individual to use and control all their shipments, what a nightmare in the era of good governance and transparency.

(This article reflects the personal opinion of the authors and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. Mr. Peña is the chair of the MAP-Bureau of Customs-Liaison Program and president of MOF Company (Subic), Inc. Atty. Sto.Tomas is the legal chief of the Port Users Confederation.)

Non-life insurance summit set

A ONE-DAY SUMMIT ON THE non-life sector of the insurance industry will be held on Thursday, March 23, 2006, at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel. This is the Third Summit organized by Insurance Philippines with the theme "Coping with the Unpredictable Insurance Landscape."

As insurance and reinsurance is now global in perspective with multifarious issues to be resolved, the summit will feature distinguished speakers that will include Brian L. D'Souza,

Executive vice-president, Federal Phoenix Insurance Co., "Realities of the Property Insurance Market"; Peter Zimmerli, head Natural Hazards, CUO, Swiss Re, Hong Kong, "Global Warming and Its Relevance to Reinsurance and Insurance"; Wilfrido C. Bantayan, president, National Reinsurance Corp. of the Phils., "The New National Reinsurance Corporation of the Philippines-Its Role and Contribution to the Philippine Insurance Market"; Edwin S. Pineda, senior economist, University of Asia and the Pacific, "An Update on the Tax Situation Affecting the Non-Life Insurance Sector"

Competitive intelligence course on

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The Center for Global Best Practices invites you to attend this one-time seminar scheduled on March 16 & 17, 2006 at the Peninsula Hotel, Makati City Philippines. Limited to 40 seats only. For inquiries, please call (+63 2) 842-7148 or telefax (+63 2) 842-7159.

Car firms endorse biofuels use

By Abigail L. Ho

THE CHAMBER OF AUTOMOTIVE MANUFACturers of the Philippines Inc. (Campi) has endorsed the use of diesel with a 1-percent blend of coco methyl ester (CME).

But the shift to CME-blended diesel could not be done immediately, said Campi fuels and emission sub-committee chair Jeff Matsuo during a biofuels conference last week.

Matsuo said car manufacturers needed at least two years from the passage of a biofuels bill to come up with new vehicle models compatible with alternative fuels.

"We need time to develop and manufacture vehicles. For new models, we need to do some retrofitting to ensure compliance with the new law," he said.

The energy department said Campi's statement should encourage oil giants Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Chevron Philippines Inc. (formerly Caltex Philippines Inc.), and Total (Philippines) Corp. to at least sell bottled CME in their outlets.

The DOE likewise allayed fears of vehicle manufacturers that the use of biodiesel would have adverse effects on vehicle engines, citing several tests performed on different CME blends.

These tests, the DOE said, showed that using CME-blended diesel improved engine performance by increasing power and torque, resulting in more mileage and reduced fuel consumption.

According to the tests, mileage shot up by 1-2 kilometers per liter.

DOE energy utilization and management bureau director Mario Marasigan welcomed Campi's endorsement, although the DOE had yet to receive a formal manifestation of support from the group.

The group likewise had yet to issue a similar endorsement for ethanol use.

Campi had earlier said that while it supported the government's alternative fuels program, its main concern was the welfare of the consumers as the fuels could cause some problems on vehicle engines.

This was why the group called for "rigorous standards" for biofuel use in the country, stressing compliance with the Philippine National Standards (PNS).

The PNS specify the requirements that a product should meet to ensure safety and quality.

For fuels, compliance with safety and emission standards as well as acceptability with the vehicle industry are additional PNS requirements.

Coco-biodiesel has existing PNS.

Standards for ethanol are up for endorsement to the Department of Trade and Industry's Bureau of Product Standards.

What are women complaining about?

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY last week, the women were on the march again. But, what were they complaining about?

I will ignore that the march was really an anti-Gloria demonstration. Malacañang does not need my help in handling the situation. I will also ignore that the march was headed by communist-front organizations like Gabriela. The Reds can still make a lot of noise, but hardly anybody listens anymore. Besides, waving their red flags drives people away.

Instead, I would like to talk about Filipino women's rights.

Let me start with political rights. The Filipino woman won the right to vote way back in the 1920s. No country in the Third World can match that. The Kuwaiti woman voted for the first time only last year. In fact, women in some countries in the First World have not won the right to vote.

Today, Filipino women get elected in all levels of government, from the President all the way down to the barangay council. This phenomenon is also unmatched in the Third World and most of the First. Germany got its first woman chancellor only late last year.

Let's go to the field of education. The Filipino woman has access to the highest levels of education. If she is bright enough, scholarships are available at the biggest universities.

There is no field of study that women have not crashed into. Once, I found myself chatting with several women PhDs. With my lowly BS degree in mechanical engineering, I felt like an ignoramus.

Women now dominate insurance. Eighty percent of the top life insurance producers are women. Vicenting Ayllon, chair of Insular Life, is justly proud that most of his vice presidents are women, including his chief actuary.

My childhood chum, Ming Jacinto, will soon retire as the president of a reinsurance company. The days of insurance brokerage as a male-dominated field, are, I am afraid, numbered.

Women now dominate the Actuarial Society. And, it seems, a woman cannot be an actuary nowadays unless she has the good looks to go with her math proficiency. For the first time in history, Evangeline Escobillo, a full-fledged actuary, is running the Insurance Commission.

Let's look at media. You only have to look at the banner heads of the major broadsheets and you will see who are running media. It had to be a woman like Niñez who would run into trouble under Proclamation No. 1017. Then, look at the list of reporters, columnists, editors, and TV talk show hosts, and you will see women swarming all other the place.

Let us go into the major professions. Women are everywhere. The directory of any hospital lists women doctors in every line of specialization.

When I was in college 50 years ago, a woman usually took up chemical engineering. Today, you will find women in every branch of engineering, including architecture.

Women lawyers are everywhere. Once, I had a chance to watch a court hearing. The witness was a good-looking lady. The lawyers on both sides were women, well coifed, well dressed, very articulate and good-looking. The elderly male judge was totally enjoying the whole show unfolding before him.

Finally, let us take the Filipino family. The husband may brag about being macho. But the Filipino family is matriarchal. The children look to their strong-willed mother for support and wisdom. And, most important, the wife holds the purse.

On the last International Women's Day, women around the world may have a lot to complain about. The Philippines is itself far from being a perfect place.

But, few Filipino women will dispute that the best place in the world to be a woman in—is the Philippines.

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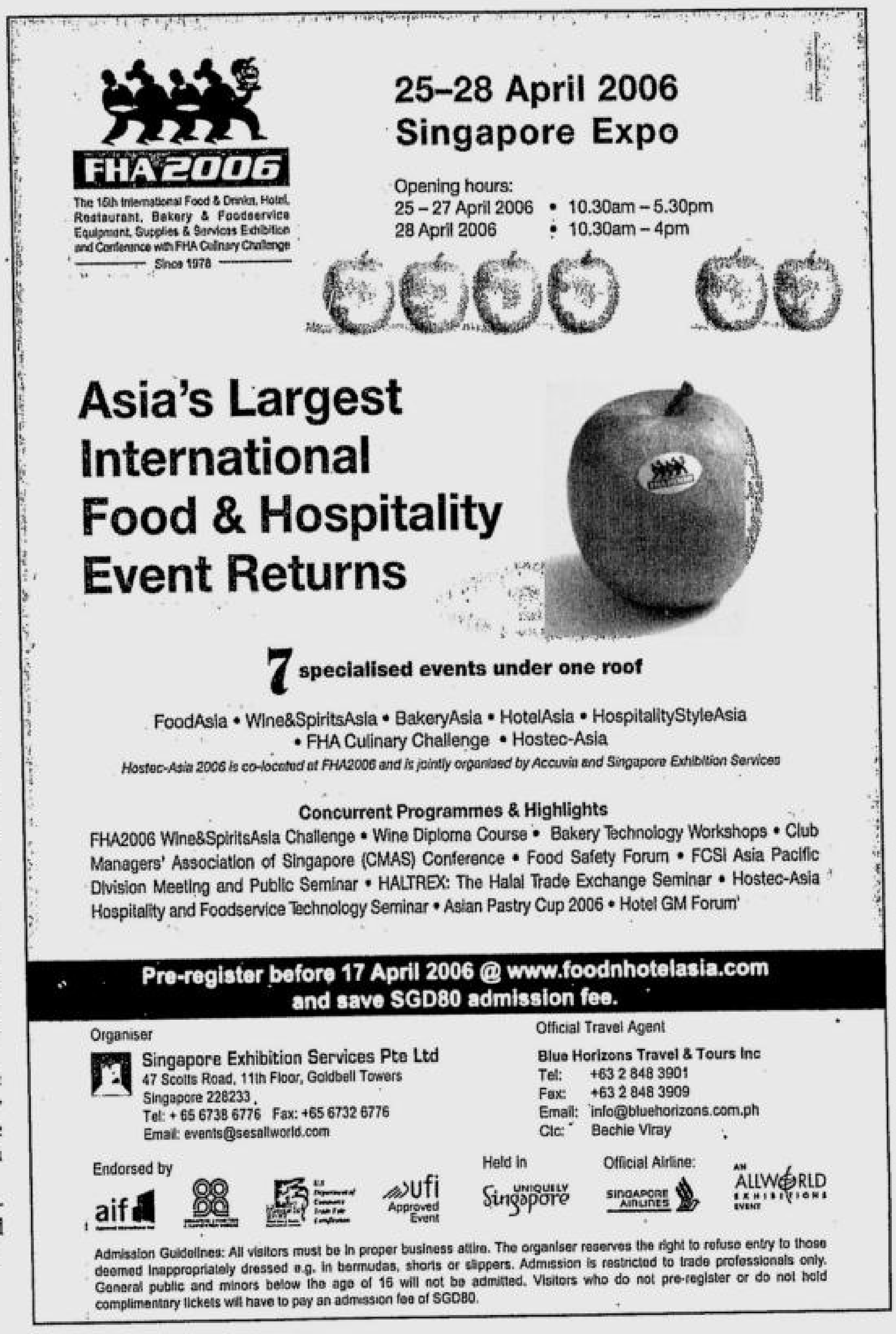

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FERTILIZER AND PESTICIDE AUTHORITY
FPA Bldg., BAI Compound, Visayas Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. 9223371, 9223362, 9273647, 9282538, Telefax 9223355, 9208238
E-mail address: fpa_77@yahoo.com, website: http://fpa.da.gov.ph

The **Government of the Philippines** through the **Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority** received a grant from **The World Bank**, through the **Philippine Ozone Desk of the Environmental Management Bureau** toward the cost of the **National Methyl Bromide Phase-out Strategy** and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this grant to payments under the contract for the supply and delivery of tools and equipment for its training program.

The **Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority** invites interested parties and to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and delivery of the following:

Ref. No.	Quantity/ Unit	Package/Lot	Estimated Cost (Php)
		Package/Lot No. I	
		Training on Alternative Technology	
1		Gas Enclosure	
	1	5-MT Capacity	66,000
	1	10-MT Capacity	89,100
2	1	Vacuum cleaner	5,000
3	8	Heating Equipment	480,000
4	5	Heat Sensors	50,000
5		Detector tubes	
	48 bxs.	high range 2000 ppm	209,880
	12 bxs.	low range 5 ppm	52,470
6	8	Monitoring pump	200,000
7	15 rolls	Plastic sheet	195,000
8	750	Sand bag	56,250
9	5 bxs.	Packaging tape	20,000
Sub-total			**1,423,700**
		Package/Lot No. II	
		Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	
1	8	SCBA	800,000
2	8	SCBA spare tank	240,000
3	8	Full face mask	132,000
4	60	Full face mask filter	96,000
5	30	Safety shoes	45,000
6	30	Cover-alls	45,000
7	60	Gloves	12,000
Sub-total			**1,370,000**
TOTAL			**2,793,700**

The procurement will be conducted through the government open competitive bidding in accordance with the harmonized procedures on procurement under *RA 9184* otherwise known as the *Government Procurement Reform Act* and the *World Bank Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits.* The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) will apply non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria in Eligibility Check and in the Preliminary Examination of Bids. Post-qualification shall be conducted.

Schedule of BAC activities are as follows:

BAC Activities	Date/Time	Place
1. Issuance of Bidding Documents	Mar. 16-23, 2006 Office hours	FPA Building
2. Pre-bid Conference	March 30, 2006, 10:00 A.M.	FPA Conference Room 2nd Floor, FPA Bldg.
3. Submission and Opening of Eligibility Envelope/Eligibility check Submission and Opening of Bids	Apr. 20, 2006, 10:00 A.M.	FPA Conference Room 2nd Floor, FPA Bldg.

Interested bidders may obtain further information from the BAC Secretariat and inspect Bidding Documents at the above address during office hours.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested bidders from the BAC Secretariat upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of P 2,500.00 in cash.

All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of and amount specified in the Instruction to Bidders of the Bidding Documents. Late bids shall not be accepted. Bids shall be opened in the presence of the Bidders or their representatives who choose to attend.

The FPA-BAC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process and to reject all Bids at any time prior to the award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

The Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee
Project Management Unit – National Methyl Bromide Phase-out Strategy
Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority

(Sgd.) Dr. DARIO C. SABULARSE
Deputy Executive Director, FPA
BAC Chairman

(PDI – March 13, 2006)

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BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS

In Compliance with RA 7041

A. **HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OFFICER IV – SG 22**
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIVISION – Item No. OMBA-HRM04-1-1998
Education: Bachelor's degree; Experience: 3 years of relevant experience; Training: 16 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: Career Service Professional/ Second Level Eligibility

B. **GRAFT INVESTIGATION & PROSECUTION OFFICER I – SG 26**
1. **GENERAL INVESTIGATION BUREAU B** – Item No. OMBA-GIO1-5-2004
2. **GENERAL INVESTIGATION BUREAU C** – Item Nos. OMBA-GIO1-6-2004; OMBA-GIO1-56-1998; (2 positions)
3. **ASSETS INVESTIGATION BUREAU** – Item Nos. OMBA-GIO1-7-2004; OMBA-GIO1-36-2003; (2 positions)
4. **INTELLIGENCE BUREAU** – Item Nos. OMBA-GIO1-8-2004; OMBA-GIO1-53-1998; (2 positions)

Education: Bachelor of Laws; Experience: Three (3) years of experience in the practice of law, counseling, investigation/prosecution of cases, hearings of administrative/criminal cases, legal research or other related works; Training: 24 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: RA 1080 (BAR)

C. **PROJECT EVALUATION OFFICER IV – SG 22**
FIELD INVESTIGATION OFFICE – Item No. OMBA-PEO4-1-2004
Education: Bachelor's degree relevant to the job; Experience: 3 years of relevant experience; Training: 16 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: Career Service Professional/Second level Eligibility

D. **SECRETARY II – SG 9**
1. **GENERAL INVESTIGATION BUREAU B** – Item No. OMBA-SEC2-6-2004
2. **GENERAL INVESTIGATION BUREAU C** – Item No. OMBA-SEC2-7-2004
3. **ASSETS INVESTIGATION BUREAU** – Item No. OMBA-SEC2-8-2004

Education: Completion of two years studies in college; Experience: 1 year of relevant experience; Training: 4 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: Career Service Subprofessional/Second Level Eligibility

Applicants should submit within ten (10) calendar days from the date of this publication to the Human Resource Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

1) A letter stating the position applied for;
2) Duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3) 1" x 1" picture (colored)
4) * Bar / Board Rating or CSC Certificate of Eligibility;
5) * Transcript of Records;
6) * Certificates of Seminars / Training attended;
7) * Service Records or Certificates from previous / present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable)
8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two rating periods (for current government employees only);
9) Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

* Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies.

Republic of the Philippines
BATANGAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Rizal St., Batangas City

NOTICE OF SEARCH AND CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The Board of Regents of the Batangas State University formally and publicly announces that the Search for Presidency of the **BATANGAS STATE UNIVERSITY** is now open. Interested applicants and/or nominees are invited to send their formal applications to the Search Committee chaired by Dr. Ma. Cristina D. Padolina.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

- Must be a Filipino citizen;
- Preferably a holder of a doctoral degree;
- Preferably 35 to 60 years old;
- Must be morally upright;
- With Recognized leadership in his/her profession in the academe or industry;
- With at least five (5) years of managerial/administrative experience.

In addition to the above-mentioned qualifications, the applicants should make a full disclosure of all administrative, criminal, and/or civil cases filed in any court in the Philippines against him/her and are required to submit the following clearances:

- National Bureau of Investigation
- Sandiganbayan
- Civil Service Commission and/or Certificate of No Pending Administrative Case issued by the Administrative Officer of present employer
- Previous Employer
- Not convicted in any administrative or criminal cases

Formal application addressed to the Search Committee should be accompanied with:

- Detailed CV and certified supporting documents
- Proposed vision, Mission and Thrusts of the University
- Results of neuro-psychiatric examination conducted by any government physician or any accredited health institution
- Medical Certificate from a government physician

Interested applicants and/or those nominated for the position are requested to submit six (6) sets of their formal application and certified supporting documents on or before March 28, 2006 to:

MR. MARLON N. FABRICANTE
Executive Assistant IV
Office of Commissioner S. M. OCAMPO, JR.
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c/o MS. ROSE MAGSINO
Batangas State University
Rizal St., Batangas City
Tel. No. (043) 723-0339

NOTICE OF SEARCH FOR

TIBURCIO TANCINCO MEMORIAL INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

PRESIDENCY

Minimum Personal Qualifications:
1. Must be a Filipino citizen.
2. Must have earned a Doctoral Degree
3. Preferably at least thirty five (35) years old but not more than sixty (60) years old at the time of application.
4. Must be morally upright, with no administrative and criminal conviction.
5. With recognized leadership in his/her profession in the academe or industry.
6. Must have a proven track record as top administrator (at least managerial/professorial level), whether in public or private, for at least a period of five (5) years. This must be supported by a document (e.g. Certification or Special Order from the concerned party) stating the managerial, professorial and/or administrative experience and the period covered.
7. Must possess leadership and managerial skills within the purview of the needs, thrusts, goals and objectives of the college

Note: Qualified applicants are requested to submit the following:
1. Formal Application Letter addressed to:

   Honorable Chair of the Board of Trustees
   Tiburcio Tancinco Memorial Institute of Science and Technology
   Calbayog City

   Attention: The Secretariat
   Search Committee for Presidency
2. Detailed Curriculum Vitaé and authenticated supporting documents
3. Applicant's Proposed Vision, Mission and Development Plan of the College within a four-year period.
4. Neuro-psychiatric Examination Result accomplished by a competent physician
5. Medical Certificate of Physical Fitness issued by a government physician from a regional medical center.
6. Authenticated Clearance Certification from the following:
   a. Ombudsman or Sandiganbayan
   b. Civil Service Commission
   c. National Bureau of Investigation
   d. Present Employer

Important: Interested applicants must send the above-mentioned documentary requirements in seven (7) sets/copies on or before March 20, 2006 to any of the following:

ANTONIO A. SARZATA, JR.
Board Secretary
Tiburcio Tancinco Memorial Institute
of Science and Technology
Calbayog City, Samar

Office of Commissioner Nona S. Ricafort
Commission on Higher Education
DAP Bldg., Ortigas Center
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

DR. MARIA RITA CASTILLON-ORTIZ, Ed.D.
Officer-in-Charge/Chair of the Search Committee
Commission on Higher Education Region VIII
Tacloban City 6500

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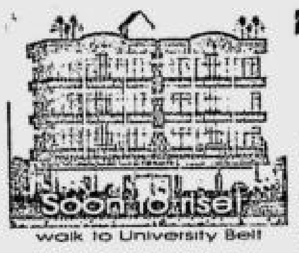

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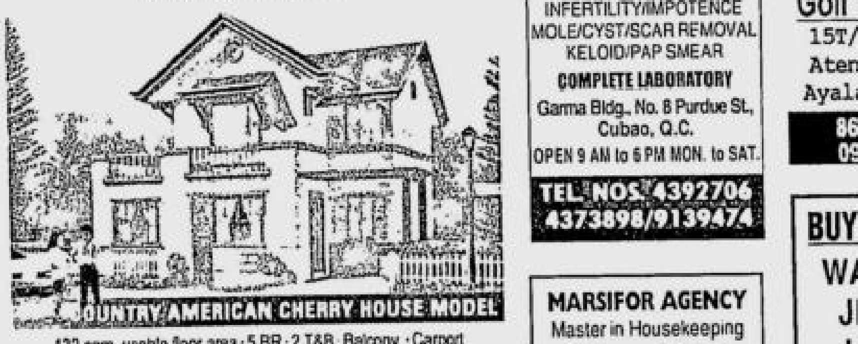

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SUNDAY, (MAR 19) 2:00PM, 5:00PM

OUTSIDE VENUES

- **JOLLIBEE** Isetann Recto (Mar 14) Tuesday 4:30pm
- **JOLLIBEE SM North** Annex G/F (Mar 15) Wednesday, 4:30pm
- **CHOWKING SM SAN LAZARO** (Mar 16) Thursday 4:30 pm
- **JOLLIBEE** Pedro Gil (LRT station) Manila. (Mar 17) Friday, 4:30pm
- **MCDONALD** Pob. Cabuyao Laguna (Mar18) Saturday, 10:00am
- **HONS RESTAURANT** Halang Calamba Laguna (near Total Gas Station) (Mar18), Saturday 3:00pm
- **FIESTA HUT RESTAURANT** Brgy. San Manuel Diamond Crest Village, San Jose Del Monte Bulacan (Mar18), Saturday 3:30pm

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MORE POWER FOR BAGUIO ECONOMIC ZONE

To meet the projected rise in power demand of locators inside the Baguio City Economic Zone (BCEZ), the National Transmission Corporation (TransCo) recently energized an additional 50-MVA transformer in its La Trinidad (Benguet) Substation which now has a total capacity of 200 MVA serving some fifteen industrial locators in the ecozone. Most notable of these locators is Texas Instruments (TI), ranked 166th on Fortune Magazine's "500 Largest U.S. Corporations" in 2005. TI is the largest producer of DSP chips in the world. DSP chips are the brains behind cellphones. The ceremonial switch-on rites was attended by (from left) TransCo AVP Fernando S. Abesamis, PEZA Division Chief Mody Agyao, Benguet Vice Governor Cresencio Pacalso, La Trinidad Vice Mayor Artemio Galwan, Benguet Governor Borromeo Melchor, President Ortiz, TransCo District II Head Marcelo G. Ganaden, TransCo District II Substation Engineer Jurist Awal, PEZA Zone Administrator Tereso Panga and TransCo VP Guillermo R. Redoblado.

January 25, 2006
Lecxal, La Trinidad, Benguet
of 50 MVA Transformer

PGMA WITH TINDAHAN NATIN OPERATORS

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo pose with individuals selected by the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the local government units to operate Tindahan Natin outlets in Sitio Puting Bato, Santo Niño and Buklod Diwa Road, all in North Bay Boulevard South, Navotas. The Tindahan Natin is part of the government's initiatives to provide low-priced but quality rice and fortified noodles through stores accessible to ordinary consumers. NFA rice of well-milled variety will be sold at P18 per kg in the Tindahan Natin. To be implemented initially in Metro Manila particularly in the 18 priority poverty areas, the Tindahan Natin outlets will be eventually opened in provinces with high poverty incidence. Also in photo are Congressman Ricky Sandoval of Navotas (left) and NFA Administrator Gregorio Y. Tan, Jr. (at the back)

Makati Med's 5th post grad course set

The Makati Medical Center's Department of Medicine under the able leadership of Dr. Adoracion Nambayan-Abad and Vice Chairmen Dr. Jose Sanchez and Dr. May Ortiz-Sison, who is also the head of the organizing committee will hold its 5th Post Graduate Course "Metabolic Syndrome: A Multi-Disciplinary Concern" on Wednesday, March 15 at the Ledesma Hall, 9th Flr., Makati Medical Center. The course which will be held from 7 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., will tackle the problems of metabolic syndrome from various sub-specialty points of view with the following as speakers, Drs. Glenn Benitez, Ruth Marie Divinagracia, Estrellita Fernando-Lopez, Saturnino Javier, Augusto D. Litonjua, Jose Paulo Lorenzo, Ernesto Olympia, and Josephine Raboca. For more information, please call 752-2521.

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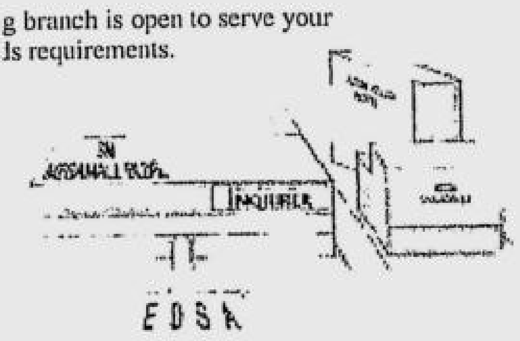

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 10, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Banco De Oro Univ. Bank	34.5	35	34.5	34.5	245,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	59	59.5	59	59	1,631,000
China Banking Corp.	680	685	680	685	290
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	18	18	18	18	200
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.42	0.43	0.41	0.41	10,690,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	65	65	64	64.5	87,000
International Exch. Bank	25.5	26	25.5	25.5	4,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	37	37.5	36.5	37	754,100
Philippine National Bank	31	31	31	31	44,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.75	12.75	12.75	12.75	1,800
Security Bank Corp.	37.5	37.5	37.5	37.5	5,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	34.5	34.5	34	34	10,700
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	240,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	23.75	24	23.75	24	1,600
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	230,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	145	145	145	145	28,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2180	2190	2180	2190	420
Ivantage Corp.	0.79	0.79	0.78	0.78	2,640,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	45	45	44.5	44.5	2,248,500
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	42	42	40	40.5	431,400
Manila Electric Co. A	12.75	12.75	12.75	12.75	59,500
Manila Electric Co. B	19.75	19.75	19	19.25	56,900
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.4	6,360,000
Petron Corp.	4.45	4.55	4.45	4.5	1,474,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	2,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.91	0.91	0.9	0.9	360,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
CADP Group Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	19.25	19.25	19	19	85,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	35	35.5	35	35.5	189,500
Pancake House Inc.	3.65	3.7	3.65	3.7	13,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	58,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	130,000
San Miguel Corp. A	61	61.5	60.5	61.5	110,900
San Miguel Corp. B	79.5	80	79	80	32,100
Phil Tob Flue Cur & Redry	10	10	10	10	1,000
Universal Robina Corp	17.75	17.75	17.5	17.5	195,200
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	550,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.28	2,660,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	1,027,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.1	4.3	4.05	4.3	2,536,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	2,000,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.075	0.08	0.075	0.075	3,400,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.7	0.7	0.52	0.54	4,120,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	12,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.0075	0.0085	0.0075	0.0085	11,000,000
Ayala Corp.	337.5	342.5	337.5	340	45,810
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	150,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	604,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	11,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.46	2.46	2.42	2.44	10,016,000
APC Group Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	50,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	37,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.87	0.87	0.87	0.87	530,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	15,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	21,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.94	0.94	0.93	0.93	2,550,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3	3.05	3	3.05	245,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	2.1	2.22	2.1	2.22	5,607,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	22,000
JG Summit Holdings Inc.	5.1	5.1	5	5.1	492,000
Medco Holdings	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.27	750,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.21	720,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	640,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.245	0.25	910,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.51	250,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	3,110,000
SM Investments Corp.	218	218	214	214	25,650
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	4,500,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	2,110,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	10.5	10.75	10.25	10.75	3,433,100
Belle Corp.	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.96	770,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	40,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	50,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.72	1.74	1.72	1.74	1,258,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.62	1.62	1.6	1.6	147,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	1,490,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	110,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.44	0.45	370,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.028	0.028	0.027	0.028	4,100,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.18	1.2	6,141,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	200,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.215	0.22	0.21	0.215	1,630,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	70,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.44	1.44	1.4	1.42	6,443,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	11,780,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.42	0.43	0.33	0.35	19,870,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.22	0.225	0.215	0.22	4,020,000
SM Development Corp.	1.46	1.46	1.42	1.42	85,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.6	7.7	7.6	7.7	3,295,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.135	0.125	0.13	6,290,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	22,200
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.88	0.9	0.88	0.9	360,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	815	815	810	815	39,300
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.15	759,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1815	1815	1800	1800	64,140
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.185	0.19	5,260,000
Imperial Res.	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	3,000,000
Ionics Inc.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	25,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	300,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	2,000
Philweb Corp.	0.025	0.025	0.024	0.025	133,700,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	13,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	12.25	12.25	12.25	12.25	310,900
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	500,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.28	1.3	1.28	1.3	4,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.74	1.76	1.74	1.76	916,000
Manila Jockey Club	3	3.05	3	3.05	11,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	400,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	8.9	9.1	8.9	9.1	17,000
Far Eastern University	610	610	600	600	180
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.5	1.56	1.44	1.44	172,000
Paxys Inc.	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	470,000
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	100,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	205,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	40,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.8	361,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	800,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.24	0.245	0.24	0.245	250,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.015	0.016	0.015	0.016	21,400,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	1,800,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	43,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.76	1.76	1.76	1.76	4,521,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.9	1.94	1.9	1.92	12,378,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	35,500
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	320,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.33	0.33	0.31	0.31	50,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.24	0.25	0.235	0.235	1,330,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	336,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.009	0.0095	0.009	0.009	103,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.47	100,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	60,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	14,000
PREFERRED					
DMCI Holdings Inc.- Pref.	1400	1400	1400	1400	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	100
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	700
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	100
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	11.5	11.75	11.5	11.75	228,600

CURRENCIES

March 12, 2006

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.839208	1	51.484
Japan	Yen	0.007103	0.008464	0.4358
United Kingdom	Pound	1.457452	1.7367	89.4123
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.108133	0.128851	6.6338
Switzerland	Franc	0.639056	0.761499	39.205
Canada	Dollar	0.723081	0.861623	44.3598
Singapore	Dollar	0.514851	0.613497	31.5853
Australia	Dollar	0.617155	0.735402	37.8614
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.226842	2.653505	136.6131
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.223783	0.26666	13.7287
Brunei	Dollar	0.513277	0.611621	31.4887
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000091	0.000108	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.02146	0.025572	1.3165
UAE	Dirham	0.228505	0.272287	14.0184
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.1916	61.3483
Argentina	Peso	0.27247	0.324675	16.7156
Brazil	Real	0.387983	0.462321	23.8021
Denmark	Kroner	0.134063	0.15975	8.2246
India	Rupee	0.018943	0.022573	1.1621
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.225654	0.268889	13.8435
Mexico	New Peso	0.078328	0.093336	4.8053
New Zealand	Dollar	0.544127	0.648382	33.3813
South Africa	Rand	0.133943	0.159607	8.2172
Korea	Won	0.000855	0.001019	0.0525
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025838	0.030788	1.5851

Lackluster ...

From page B1

costs here.

"The PSE composite index is showing a semblance of equilibrium. The market seems indecisive as shown by the main index's inability to break out from the 2,160 main resistance level. Generally, investors are optimistic as shown by the Phisix's rising long-term trend. For the short term, the Phisix may have a positive bias as it is very close to the support line of its intermediate uptrend channel," AB Capital wrote.

Last week, the PSE composite index fell 1.6 percent or 27 points to 2,103.37. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

BOI grants perks to 3 projects worth ₱757.5M

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS GRANTED perks last week to three projects worth a combined P757.5 million, the biggest of which is controlled by singer-songwriter Jose Mari Chan and his family.

Biscom Inc., where Chan and his family have a 50.86-percent stake, is embarking on a P700-million venture in refining sugar and molasses in Binalbagan town in Negros Occidental.

The Chans' project will open up 60 new jobs and is expected to start commercial operations by January 2007.

Venvi Agro-Industrial Ventures Inc.'s P55.5-million piggery in San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte, on the other hand, would need at least 17 new workers to help in fattening and breeding live hogs starting January next year.

The third project is RG Offshore Financial Services Ltd. Philippines Inc.'s P2-million venture in providing data entry services for overseas companies wanting to outsource business processes.

RG Offshore's project would be set up in Ortigas Center in Pasig City and would hire 15 new workers by March.

All three projects would enjoy a four-year tax holiday as well as other incentives, like duty-free importation of capital equipment.

The projects were processed under the BOI's one-day project evaluation process.

Under the program started in early October 2005, evaluation to issuance of registration papers of "straightforward projects" is completed within three working days, and 10 working days for more complicated projects.

This is a marked improvement from the previous process where the evaluation and approval of applications took 20 working days, while the issuance of Certificate of Registration ate up an additional 30 to 90 days, depending on how soon the pre-registration legal documents were submitted by applicant firms.

In 2002, the Board had already slashed project evaluation time by half to 10 working days.

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club A/B*	1,100,000/Pls. Call*	Pls Call
Alta Vista B/Corp.*	-	Pls. Call/300,000*
Baguio Country Club	-	500,000
Camp John Hay	-	180,000
Canlubang Golf	500,000	Pls. Call
Canyon Woods	170,000	-
Capitol Hills	60,000	-
Cebu Country Club	1,500,000	1,350,000
Celebrity Sports	120,000	100,000
City Sports Club Cebu	-	350,000
Club Filipino	110,000	-
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	330,000*	150,000/Pls. Call*/350,000**
Eastridge A/B*	Pls. Call	-
Evercrest	65,000	-
Fairways & Bluewater	Pls Call	Pls Call
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	120,000/200,000*	150,000*
Luisita Golf	Pls. Call	300,000
Manila Golf Corporate	Pls. Call	11,500,000
Manila Golf Individual	Pls. Call	11,000,000
Manila Polo	Pls. Call	Pls Call
Manila Southwoods A/B*	350,000/Pls. Call*	300,000/700,000*
Makati Sports Club	180,000	170,000
Manila Yacht Club Ind.	350,000	350,000
Metropolitan Club A/B*	120,000/150,000*	90,000
Mimosa Ind./C2*/C3**	Pls Call	150,000/300,000*/400,000**
Mt. Malarayat A	250,000	-
Orchard A/B*/C**	180,000/Pls. Call*/400,000**	150,000
Punta Fuego	400,000	-
Quezon City Sports Club	180,000	140,000
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	90,000/150,000*/250,000**	130,000*
Rockwell Leisure Club	Pls Call	180,000
Royale Tagaytay CC	80,000	-
Sherwood A/B*/C**	70,000/150,000**	60,000*
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	Pls Call	1,100,000/1,550,000*
The Palms Country Club	550,000	350,000
Tagaytay Country Club	330,000	310,000
Tagaytay Highlands	Pls. Call	-
Tagaytay Midlands	Pls Call	600,000
The Country Club	2,000,000	-
Tower Club	140,000	-
Valley Golf	200,000	-
Valle Verde Ind.	100,000	-
Wack Wack Golf	6,350,000	6,175,000

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	1,175,000	1,050,000
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	1,250,000	1,100,000
Anvaya Cove Beach & Nature Club	Please Call	
Baguio Country Club	Please Call	500,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	40,000	-
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	100,000	-
Camp John Hay	220,000	170,000
Canlubang	500,000	400,000
Capitol Hills	60,000	-
Cebu Country Club	1,500,000	1,350,000
Celebrity Sports Club	120,000	-
Club Filipino	100,000	-
Eagleridge "A"/"B"/"C"	Please Call	-
Forest Hills "A"	100,000	90,000
Forest Hills "B"	200,000	-
Forest Hills "C"	200,000	-
Makati Sports Club "A"	180,000	165,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	250,000	-
Manila Golf (Corporate)	-	11,500,000
Manila Golf (Individual)	11,300,000	10,500,000
Manila Polo	2,500,000	2,250,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	330,000	-
Manila Southwoods "B"	Please Call	600,000
Manila Yacht Club	350,000	-
Mimosa (Individual)	-	160,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	-	450,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	250,000	200,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	350,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "A"	200,000	150,000
Orchard Golf Club "B"	-	350,000
Orchard Golf Club "C"	350,000	-
Quezon City Sports Club	170,000	140,000
Rockwell	Please Call	-
Spa & Lodge	400,000	-
Sta. Elena "A"	1,200,000	1,100,000
Sta. Elena "B"	-	1,500,000
Tagaytay Country Club	330,000	300,000
Tagaytay Highlands	680,000	650,000
Tagaytay Midlands	650,000	600,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	100,000	-
Valle Verde (Corporate)	190,000	-
Valley Golf	220,000	200,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	6,350,000	6,175,000

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pay as low as P 13,775* for 10 years

Antipolo
BENTLEY PARK SUBD.
VACANT LOT
Lot Area / Min. Bid Price
246 sqm. P 861, 000.00
281 sqm. P 950, 000.00
MAIA ALTA
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
104 sqm 80 sqm P 1,600,000.00
126 sqm 92 sqm P 1,800,000.00

Quezon City
FAIRVIEW PARK SUBD.
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
72 sqm. 160 sqm P 2,345,000.00
489 sqm. 276 sqm P 3,765,000.00
528 sqm 379 sqm. P 6,000,000.00
GRANWOOD VILLAS
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
54 sqm 66 sqm P 1,755,000.00
111 sqm 70.6 sqm. P1,800,000.00

Valenzuela City
FORTUNE VILLAGE 5
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
244 sqm. 120 sqm. P 1,050,000.00
247 sqm. 180 sqm. P 1,050,000.00
310 sqm 350 sqm P 3,400,000.00
MARULAS
HOUSE AND LOT
166 sqm. 300 sqm P 2,185,000.00

Bulacan
NORTHWINDS
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
80 sqm. 32 sqm. P 230,000.00
77 sqm. 32 sqm P 260,000.00
79 sqm. 56 sqm. P 310,000.00
CARISSA HOMES
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
54 sqm. 21 sqm P 270,000.00
79 sqm 73 sqm P 360,000.00

Pampanga
ROYAL MEADOWS
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
120 sqm. 32 sqm. P 279,000.00
132 sqm. 31.5 sqm. P 450,000.00
134 sqm 32 sqm P 455,000.00
VILLA VILLA
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
120 sqm 32 sqm P 279,000.00
189 sqm 31 sqm P 410,000.00

Las Piñas
B.F. RESORT VILLAGE
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
150 sqm. 68 sqm P 1,283,000.00
270 sqm 149 sqm. P 2,199,000.00
240 sqm 355 sqm. P 4,988,000.00
CAMELLA HOMES
HOUSE AND LOT
120 sqm. 105 sqm. P 1,125,000.00
315 sqm. 194 sqm. P 1,890,000.00

GOLDPATH
VACANT LOT
Muntinlupa
Lot Area / Min. Bid Price
207 sqm. P 1,035,000.00
290 sqm. P 1,450,000.00
Las Piñas
Lot Area / Min. Bid Price
280 sqm P 1,540,000.00
1,572.39 sqm. P 5,221,000.00
2,123 sqm. P 7,430,000.00

Cavite
SPRINGVILLE SUBD.
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
64 sqm 34 sqm P 400,000.00
55 sqm. 45 sqm. P 450,000.00
LA MEDITERRANEA
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
110 sqm. 126 sqm P 1,200,000.00

Ilo-Ilo
DIVINA GRACIA, LA PAZ
VACANT LOT
Lot Area / Min. Bid Price
312 sqm. P 702,000.00
320 sqm. P 634,000.00
645 sqm. P 1,277,000.00
845 sqm. P 2,205,000.00

Laguna
BELLE REEVE SUBD.
VACANT LOT
Lot Area / Min. Bid Price
735 sqm. P 3,762,000.00
824 sqm. P 4,500,000.00
958 sqm P 5,607,000.00
LA RESIDENCIA
VACANT LOT
Lot Area / Min. Bid Price
300 sqm. P 1,372,000.00
335 sqm. P 1,760,000.00

Laguna
PROMENADE
VACANT LOT
Lot Area / Min. Bid Price
575 sqm. P 2,678,000.00
739 sqm. P 4,325,000.00
832 sqm. P 4,869,000.00
857 sqm P 5,013,000.00

Laguna
PAMELA HOMES
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
100 sqm. 36 sqm P 114,000.00
73 sqm 36 sqm P 115,000.00
LAKESHORE SUBD.
HOUSE AND LOT
Lot Area / Floor Area / Min. Bid Price
252 sqm. 100 sqm P 1,200,000.00
123 sqm. 98 sqm P 1,490,000.00

ANTIPOLO

2RSB-V-AT18- VACANT LOT
L.A. 1,030 sqm.
B1 L19 Beverly St.
MISSION HILLS
Min. Bid Price: P 3, 500, 000.00

2RSB-O-AT16-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 112 sqm. F.A. 67 sqm
B16 L17 Woodrow Hills
Min. Bid Price: P 900, 000.00

2RSB-O-AT19 HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 1, 305 sqm. F.A. 744 sqm.
27 SUNRISE BEVERLY HILLS SUBD
Min. Bid Price: P 11,000,000.00

2RSB-OAT20-HOUSE & LOT
L.A 55 sqm. F.A. 52 sqm.
B2 L4 MONTE DE ORO
Min. Bid Price: P 743,000.00

2RSB-O-AT21- VACANT LOT
L.A. 2,415 sqm.
B14 L1 VICTORI VALLEY
Min. Bid Price: P 3,500,000.00

2RSB-0-AT-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 165 sqm F.A. 222 sqm.
20 Getty cor Dalton St.,
FILINVEST HOMES EAST
Min. Bid Price: P 2,750,000.00

CAINTA, TAYTAY, ANGONO, RIZAL

2RSB-V-SM2- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 200 sqm. F.A. 162.5 sqm.
B3 L15 A&B Ringgit St.,
BANKER'S VILL. 5
Min. Bid Price: P 1,823,000.00

2RSB-V-SM5- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 189 sqm. F.A. 200 sqm.
Jurado Compound, GUINAYANG
Min. Bid Price: P 1,700,000.00

2RSB-V-AG4- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 116 sqm. F.A. 202 sqm.
DONYA NIEVES, Sto Niño
Min. Bid Price: P 1,473,000.00

2RSB-V-SM6- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 50 sqm. F.A. 50 sqm.
B33 L3 Phase 4, TIERRA MONTE
Min. Bid Price: P 225,000.00

2RSB-V-PG1- VACANT LOT
L.A. 1,768 sqm.
FELIX AVE., Cainta
Min. Bid Price P 15,000,000.00

2RSB-V-AG1-VACANT LOT
L.A. 102 sqm.
B22 L7 PRIMROSE HILLS
Min. Bid Price. P 388,000.00

2RSB-V-AG2-VACANT LOT
L.A. 100 sqm
B22 L1 PRIMROSE HILLS
Min.Bid Price: P 380,000.00

2RSB-V-AG3-VACANT LOT
L.A. 348 sqm.
B1 L57 STA. CATALINA
Min. Bid Price: P 1,392,000.00

2RSB-O-MR1-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 420 sqm. F.A. 310 sqm.
73 Dama de Noche,TWINVILLE
Min Bid. Price. P2,552,000.00

2RSB-O-CN1- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 200 sqm F.A. 166 sqm.
17 Doylestown St.
COUNTRY HOMES, Cainta
Min. Bid Price: P 1,676,000.00

2RSB-O-CN2- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 312 sqm F.A. 378 sqm.
B3 L14 & 15 GREENLAND
Min. Bid Price: P 3,800,000.00

2RSB-O-TY - HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 132 sqm. F.A. 182 sqm
B7 L3 Hillside St., TOWERHILLS
Min. Bid Price: P 1,500,000.00

CALOOCAN

2RSB-V-CL3- VACANT LOT
L.A. 185 sqm.
B17 L15 PALMERA SPRING III, Camarin
Min. Bid Price: P 450,000.00

2RSB-O-CL6- VACANT LOT
L.A. 872 sqm.
MIRAMONTE HEIGHTS, Camarin
Min. Bid Price: P 635,000.00

2RSB-V-CL7- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 106 sqm. F.A. 40 sqm
B4 L1 Madrid St., TIERRA NOVA, Bagumbong
Min. Bid Price: P 508,000.00

2RSB-V-CL9- VACANT LOT
L.A. 199 sqm.
B9 L4 Copenhagen St.
VISTA VERDE NORTH, Kaybiga
Min. Bid Price: P 470,000.00

2RSB-O-CL1-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 216 sqm. F.A. 175 sqm
B1 L17 HILLCREST SUBD., Camarin
Min. Bid. Price: P 2,100,000.00

2RSB-O-CL2- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 96 sqm F.A. 67 sqm
B7 L10 PALMERA SPRING, Bagumbong
Min. Bid Price: P 610,000.00

1RSB-O-CL4-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 226 sqm F.A. 200 sqm.
B4 L25 PLEASANT VIEW SUBD., Bagbaguin
Min. Bid. Price: P 2,100,000.00

1RSB-O-CL6-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 50 sqm. F.A. 50 sqm.
415 Royal Palm, WHISPERING PALMS
Min. Bid Price: P 612,000.00

2RSB-O-CL5-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 50sqm. F.A. 50 sqm
B13 L4 WHISPERING PALMS
Min. Bid Price: P 615,000.00

2RSB-O-CL8-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 153 sqm. F.A. 70.18 sqm.
20 Athens, VISTA VERDE NORTH, Bagumbong
Min. Bid Price: P 918,000.00

2RSB-O-TY1- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 238 sqm F.A. 126 sqm.
B4 L11 Langka St., DIVIDEND HOMES
Min. Bid Price: P 1,950,000.00

2RSB-O-BN1- VACANT LOT
L.A. 183 sqm.
122 M. Oja St., SAN JUAN HGHTS.
Min. Bid Price: P 786,000.00

2RSB-O-SM3- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 240 sqm. F.A. 232 sqm
B5 L 29 MARVI HILLS
Min Bid Price: P 1,550,000.00

2RSB-O-SM4- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 50 sqm. F.A. 40 sqm.
B36 L11 Nangka, TIERRA MONTE
Min. Bid Price P 250,000.00

2RSB-O-SM5- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 54 sqm. F.A. 50 sqm.
B6 L19 BIRMINGHAM, Guinayang
Min. bid Price P 900,000.00

PASIG CITY

1RSB-V-PG1-OFFICE CONDO
L.A. 65.34 sqm. F.A. 30 sqm.
Unit L101-A-L101 OMM CITRA, SAN MIGUEL AVE.
Min. Bid Price: P 2,025,000.00

1RSB-V-PG2 CONDO w/ parking
F.A. 50.47 sqm.
Unit F-301/F-302 HAMPTON GARDEN
Min. Bid Price: P 2,025,000.00

1RSB-VPG3-CONDO w/ parking
F.A. 90.47 sqm
Unit F-302 HAMPTON GARDEN
Min. Bid Price. P 2,025,000.00

1RSB-V-PG4-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 179sqm. F.A. 314 sqm.
96 Madonna BRIDGESTONE PARK
Min. Bid Price. P 3,757,000.00

2RSB-O-AT-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 177 sqm F.A. 182 sqm.
B3 L11 Dahlia St., GREENWOODS Exec., Uhlang Kawayan
Min. Bid Price. P 2,350,000.00

QUEZON CITY

1RSB-V-QC12-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 81.80 sqm. F.A. 76 sqm
Unit 9 APA COMP.
Min. Bid Price: P 900,000.00

2RSB-V-QC8-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 86 sqm F.A. 67.2 sqm.
B11 L52 GRANWOOD VILLAS
Min. Bid Price: 1,262,000.00

2RSB-O-QC1-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 73.37 sqm. F.A. 119 sqm.
B15 L42 Unit 2, West Fairview
Min. Bid. Price: P 1,600,000.00

2RSB-O-QC3-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 73 sqm. F.A 119 sqm.
Unit 6 Opal St., WEST FAIRVIEW
Min. Bid Price: P 2,400,000.00

2RSB-O-QC4- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 378 sqm F.A 842 sqm.
23 Pinesville GREENWOOD SUBD.
Min. Bid Price: P 7,500,000.00

2RSB-O-QC5-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 100 sq m F.A 77 sqm
B2 L30 GRANWOOD VILLAS
Min. Bid Price: P 1,925,000.00

2RSB-O-QC7- HOUSE & LOT
L.A 212 sqm. F.A 169 sqm.
B15 L2 MARYTOWN CIRCLE
Min. Bid Price: P 2,185,000.00

2RSB-O-QC8- HOUSE & LOT
L.A 73 sqm. F.A. 60 sqm
L8-D JEM3 SUBD Bantat
Min. Bid Price: P 1,160,000.00

2RSB-O-QC12- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 300sqm. F.A.80 sqm
B6B L9 Schiling St.,
NORTH FAIRVIEW
Min. Bid Price. P 3,360,000.00

1RSB-O-QC13- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 125 sqm. F.A. 168 sqm.
B2 L1 Tulip St. DOMINIC SUBD
Min. Bid Price: P 3,330,000.00

2RSB-O-QC10- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 60 sqm. F.A. 100 sqm.
Unit 8 ADELLA PARK 5 TOWNHOMES
Min. Bid Price. P 1,400,000.00

1RSB- O-QC11- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 37.40 sqm. F.A. 58.65 sqm.
Unit 207-G SOUTH TRIANGLE
Min Bid Price: P 1,850,000.00

VALENZUELA

2RSB-O-VL4- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 215.00 sqm F.A. 258.70 sqm.
5043 Sto. Rosario Modesto St.
MAPULANG LUPA
Min. Bid Price. P 2,600,000.00

BULACAN

2RSB- V-BL6- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 1,402 sqm. F.A. 60 sqm
SAPANG PALAY, SJDM
Min Bid Price: P 10,450,000.00

1RSB-V-BL7- HOUSE & LOT
L.A 845 sqm. F.A. 809 sqm.
Ris Indl. Comp., GUIGUINTO
Min. Bid Price. P 4,560,000.00

1RSB-V-BL29- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 116 sqm. F.A. 36 sqm.
B24 L35 PALMERA HOMES
Sto Cristo
Min. Bid Price: P 383,000.00

2RSB-V-BL30- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 44 sqm F.A. 34 sqm.
B31 L 6 Alley St., NORTHRIDGE
Min. Bid Price: P 124,000.00

1RSB-V-BL38- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 54 sqm. F.A. 20.62 sqm.
B8 L8 CAMELLA HOMES, STO CRISTO
Min. Bid Price: P 157,000.00

1RSB-V-BL37-VCANT LOT
L.A. 2,471 sqm.
BUROL 1st, Balagtas
Min. Bid Price: P 18,309,000.00

1RSB-O-BL38- VACANT LOT
L.A. 480sqm.
Eucalyptus, GREENPLAINS
Min. Bid Price P 1,170,000.00

1RSB-O-BL39- VACANT LOT
L.A. 3,956 sqm.
Lot 3004 C. CAMANGYANAN
Min. Bid Price: P 1,850,000.00

2RSB-O-BL1- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 79 sqm. F.A. 48 sqm
L1087 TURO, BOCAUE
Min. Bid Price: P 900,000.00

1RSB- O-BL2-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 120sqm. F.A. 100 sqm
CUTCOT, Pulilan
Min. Bid Price. P 5,800,000.00

2RSB-O-BL3- HOUSE & LOT
L.A 350 sqm. F.A 120 sqm
B2 L5 & 7 METROVILLE
Binang 1st Bocaue
Min. Bid Price: P 2,250,000.00

1RSB-O-BL- HOUSE & LOT
L.A 540sqm. F.A. 200 sqm.
5066 MARY GRACE SUBD.
Parulan, Plandel
Min. Bid Price: P 1,850,000.00

1RSB-O-BL37-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 35 sqm F.A. 27 sqm.
B16 L40 CAMELLA HOMES
Sto Cristo, SJDM
Min. Bid Price: P 215,000.00

1RSB-O-BL41- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 207 sqm. F.A. 60 sqm.
89 Sumampang Bata, MALOLOS
Min. Bid Price P 478, 000.00

1RSB-O-BL44 HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 45 sqm. F.A. 23 sqm.
569 PARULA, Plaridel
Min. Bid Price: P 850,000.00

1RSB-O-BL40- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 1,528 sqm. F.A. 305 sqm
229 Manatal, PANDI
Min. Bid Price: P 4,400,000.00

1RSB-O-BL43- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 764 sqm F.A. 132 sqm.
L67B Agnaya, PLARIDEL
Min. Bid Price: P 2,600,000.00

1RSB-O-BL42- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 45 sqm F.A. 80 sqm
8 Bungahan, S. Bata, MALOLOS
Min. Bid Price: P 276,000.00

NUEVA ECIJA

1RSB-O-CB1- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 5,686 sqm. F.A. 1,310 sqm.
Lot 1390 SALOYSOY,Cabanatuan
Min. Bid Price. P 13,000,000.00

PAMPANGA

1RSB-O-PM2- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 58 sqm. F.A. 54 sqm
B1 L8 Malaysia Ave.
METROCLARK HOMES
Min. Bid Price. P630,000.00

LAS PIÑAS

1RSB-O-LP63- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 592 sqm. F.A. 392 sqm
15 CRM Ave. cor. CRM Luz St.
B.F. HOMES, Almanza
Min. Bid Price: 7,020,000.00

1RSB- O-LP69- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 238 sqm. F.A. 112 sqm
51 Dao St., PILAR VILLAGE, Almanza
Min. Bid Price: P 1,710,000.00

MANILA

2RSB V MN56 CONDOMINIUM
F.A. 128 sqm
Unit 1207 EMPIRE PLAZA CONDO
Masangkay
Min. Bid Price: P 4,000,000.00

MAKATI

2RSB-O-MK67-HOUSE & LOT
L.A 273 sqm F.A 193 sqm
14 Marcel St. PEMBO,Fort Bonifacio
Min. Bid Price: P 2,049,000.00

PASAY

2RSB-V-PY58-OFFICE CONDO.
F.A. 33 sqm.
Unit 1108 BUENDIA TOWER
Min. Bid Price: P 1,300,000.00

2RSB-O-PY59-OFFICE CONDO.
F.A. 44 sqm.
Unit 603 BUENDIA TOWER
Min. Bid Price: P 1,499,000.00

1RSB-O-PY60- VACANT LOT
L.A. 193 sqm.
B17 L6 TOPAZ ST., Brgy. San Jose
Min. Bid Price: P 1,634,000.00

PARAÑAQUE

2RSB-V-PQ61-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 351 sqm F.A 313 sqm.
B26 L 1 Don Bosco St. BETTER-LIVING SUBD. Paranaque City
Min Bid. Price: P 3,848,000.00

1RSB-O-PQ61- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 90 sqm. F.A 174 sqm.
B42 L27 St John, BETTERLIVING SUBD., Paranaque City
Min. Bid Price: P 2,529,000.00

TAGUIG

2RSB- O TG80- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 1,048 sqm F.A 300 sqm.
135 L20 M.L. Quezon St., HAGUNOY
Min. Bid Price: P 7,200,000.00

CAVITE

2RSB-V-CV46- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 70 sqm. F.A. 30 sqm.
L10-B B47 GEORGETOWN HTS. II
Min Bid Price. P 482,000.00

2RSB-V-CV51- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 63 sqm. F.A. 38 sqm.
L7 B6 PHILHOMES VILL., Toklong
Min. Bid Price: P 329,000.00

2RSB-V-CV54-VACANT LOT
F.A. 150 sqm
B41 L9 Madrid St. TOWN & COUNTRY ESTATE
Min. Bid Price: P 450,000.00

2RSB-O-CV52- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 64 sqm. F.A. 52 sqm
B9 L30 SAN RAFAEL EXEC. VILLA
Min. Bid Price: P 844,000.00

2RSB-O-CV55- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 231 sqm. F.A. 130 sqm.
L23 B4 Poinsettia St., VIA VERDE VILL.
Min. Bid Price: P 1,350,000.00

LAGUNA

1RSB-V-LG01- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 330 sqm. F.A.110 sqm.
Lot 1-H & 1-F Pacita Ave.,
PACITA COMPLEX
Min. Bid Price: P 1,700,000.00

2RSB-V-LG03- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 186 sqm. F.A. 150 sqm.
L12 B11 Olympia Ave.,
PACITA COMPLEX
Min. Bid Price. P 1,463,000.00

2RSB-V-LG20- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 188 sqm F.A. 94 sqm.
B3 L3 Chest Nut St. LA MAREA HILLS SUBD.
Min. Bid Price. P 2,160,000.00

2RSB-V-LG22- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 573 sqm. F.A. 82 sqm.
B4 L15, 18 Rosewood St.
LA MAREA SUBD
Min. Bid Price: P 3,050,000.00

2RSB-V-LG43- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 200 sqm. F.A. 87.29 sqm.
B13 L 3 New Year Ave. GSIS HOLIDAY VILL.
Min. Bid Price: P 1,093,000.00

1RSB-O-LG42- HOUSE & LOT
L.A 950 sqm. F.A. 450 sqm
B8 L4 5,6 & 7 DON MIGUEL SUBD.
Min. Bid Price: P 4,700,000.00

2RSB-O-LG02- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 174 sqm F.A. 140 sqm
L3-B Pacita Ave., PACITA COMP
Min. Bid Price: P 1,800,000.00

2RSB-O-LG41- HOUSE & LOT
L.A 83 sqm. F.A 83 sqm
L14 Timothy St. ,CAMELLA BERMUDA HOMES PHASE 1
Banlic, Cabuyao
Min. Bid Price. P 409,000.00

2RSB- O-LG45-HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 180 sqm F.A. 157.8 sqm
B14 L10 Mont Blanc,
SOUTHPEAK II, San Pedro
Min. Bid Price. P 2,520,000.00

2RSB-V-LG44- VACANT LOT
L.A. 544 sqm
B21 L33,34 &35 SAN LORENZO VILL
Min. Bid Price: P 2,277,000.00

QUEZON PROVINCE

1RSB-O-QP71- HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 200 sqm F.A. 69 sqm
Bo. Capt. Pascual Tejada St. co. Bario Rd. BRGY. MAASIN, Candelaria
Min. Bid Price. P 513,000.00

1RSB-O-LC70- VACANT LOT
L.A. 571 sqm
National Highway,Brgy Isabang
LUCENA CITY
Min. Bid Price: P 2,065,000.00

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NTC clamps down on text 'spam'

Cell phone users claim they are billed for unwanted messages

By Daxim L. Lucas

TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORS are set to clamp down on commercial text messages being broadcast over cellular phone networks following recurring complaints from mobile phone users that they continue to be billed for unwanted incoming messages.

In response to the complaints, the NTC will implement closer monitoring of mobile phone operators' content providers by restricting them to certain access numbers which will make it easier to verify complaints against them.

NTC Commissioner Ronald O. Solis said regulators will also require all content providers to register themselves with the commission.

"This limitation on access numbers, like five content providers per access number, and the requirement for registration will make it easier to monitor them," he said in a telephone interview.

Solis said complaints lodged with the NTC against unwanted "spam" text messages number "in the hundreds." Some users complain about the inconvenience of receiving unsolicited messages while others complain that they are billed by their cellular phone operators for services without their consent.

Cellular phone firms deny billing clients for these spam messages, although persistent complains have prompted the NTC to further tighten existing guidelines governing commercial text message broadcasts.

Solis said that since cellular phone operators often blame their content providers for these activities, requiring these third-party firms to register with the NTC will help regulators ascertain which party is at fault.

The NTC added, however, that since the third-party content providers use the networks of the cellular phone firms—and that both parties share in the revenues from these messages—regulators will bear down more on the mobile phone companies.

"We will hold [the cellular phone firms] principally liable," Solis said.

He added a draft of the proposed new policies has already been prepared. It will be discussed in a public hearing in the coming days to get the comments of all stakeholders.

The new set of rules will also strengthen earlier guidelines, preventing cellular phone firms from sending more text spam once the recipient has signified his intention not to receive further messages.

At present, cell phone firms continue to send text messages to prospective clients for as long as they don't reply in the negative to the initial offer.

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Land Bank secures ₱50-B loan to boost agri credit

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE LAND BANK OF THE Philippines will secure some $985 million, or close to P50 billion, in credit from multilateral agencies.

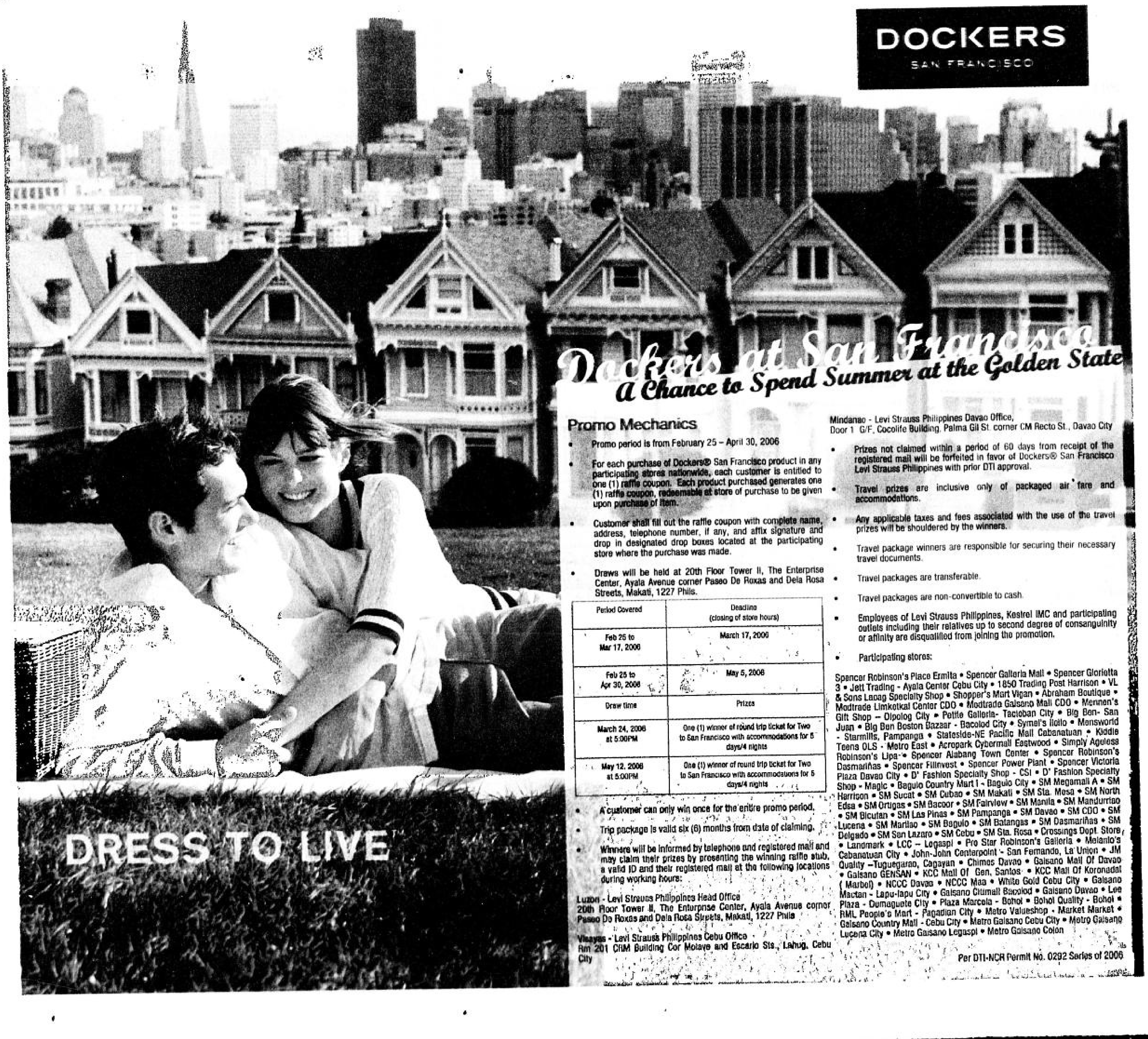
According to Liduvino Geron, Land Bank vice president for project management, the money will be lent out to small, medium and micro enterprises, local government units, developers of renewable energy projects and agriculture-based businesses.

The investment coordination committee of the National Economic and Development Authority is set to approve the official development assistance extended by the World Bank, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), and the Asian Development, Geron told the INQUIRER.

The JBIC this year is set to offer a $150-million loan to be extended as credit for the Land Bank's agriculture enterprise development.

The LBP is also negotiating with the World Bank for a $535-million loan to be lent out to SMEs and micro enterprises.

Also, the LBP will tap a $100-million loan from the ADB, which would be channeled to fund water infrastructure and renewable energy projects, including ethanol-based facilities.



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- Draws will be held at 20th Floor Tower II, The Enterprise Center, Ayala Avenue corner Paseo De Roxas and Dela Rosa Streets, Makati, 1227 Phils.

Period Covered	Deadline (closing of store hours)
Feb 25 to Mar 17, 2006	March 17, 2006
Feb 25 to Apr 30, 2006	May 5, 2006
Draw time	Prizes
March 24, 2006 at 5:00PM	One (1) winner of round trip ticket for Two to San Francisco with accommodations for 5 days/4 nights
May 12, 2006 at 5:00PM	One (1) winner of round trip ticket for Two to San Francisco with accommodations for 5 days/4 nights

- A customer can only win once for the entire promo period.
- Trip package is valid six (6) months from date of claiming.
- Winners will be informed by telephone and registered mail and may claim their prizes by presenting the winning raffle stub, a valid ID and their registered mail at the following locations during working hours:

Luzon - Levi Strauss Philippines Head Office
20th Floor Tower II, The Enterprise Center, Ayala Avenue corner Paseo De Roxas and Dela Rosa Streets, Makati, 1227 Phils

Visayas - Levi Strauss Philippines Cebu Office
Rm 201 CRM Building Cor Molave and Escario Sts., Lahug, Cebu City

Mindanao - Levi Strauss Philippines Davao Office,
Door 1 G/F, Cocolife Building, Palma Gil St. corner CM Recto St., Davao City

- Prizes not claimed within a period of 60 days from receipt of the registered mail will be forfeited in favor of Dockers® San Francisco Levi Strauss Philippines with prior DTI approval.
- Travel prizes are inclusive only of packaged air fare and accommodations.
- Any applicable taxes and fees associated with the use of the travel prizes will be shouldered by the winners.
- Travel package winners are responsible for securing their necessary travel documents.
- Travel packages are transferable.
- Travel packages are non-convertible to cash.
- Employees of Levi Strauss Philippines, Kestrel IMC and participating outlets including their relatives up to second degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the promotion.
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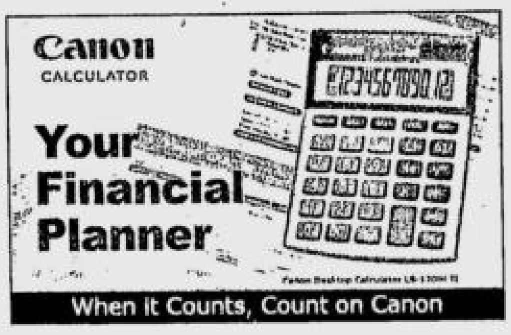
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Consumers suffer from poor broadband service

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

MARK GERALD SANTOS OF SAN Pedro, Laguna, is not happy with his fixed wireless broadband service.

Promised to have Internet connection speeds of up to 256 kilobits per second, Santos subscribed to the "Smart Wifi" service, which is actually a misleading brand since this is not a "wi-fi" or wireless fidelity service. But it allows people to connect to the Internet wirelessly at a coffee shop or a public wireless hotspot.

Santos initially enjoyed the wireless service, but problems started happening a few weeks after he subscribed in October 2005.

"For the first few weeks, I didn't encounter any problem with their service but after that I have been encountering numerous disconnections. It happens almost 10 times per hour and the promised bandwidth of 256 kbps has gone down to 50 to 60 kbps. I've been reporting this problem to their technical support but I keep getting the same response every time I call. They deliver the same spiel. The two most common reasons they give me are "You have technical issues in your base station" and "Your antenna is not in the line of site," Sabtos told Infotech Santos said in an e-mail sent on Jan. 20.

Santos immediately called Smart Wifi's sales department and requested that the service be discontinued. He was, however, told that under an agreement he signed, he was locked into the service for one year and he has to pay the remaining months if he decides to stop the service.

"I called their sales department and told them that I had enough of their service and would like to discontinue the use of their service since I'm not actually getting what I paid for. I continuously pay P988 a month (on time) and yet I don't get any Internet connection. They want me to pay P988 times the number of months left in my locked-in period of one year. I think it is very unfair for me to pay them since I'm not satisfied with the service at all. I would like to terminate my account with their company since I am not getting the service I deserve. This is a rip off," Santos said.

On Feb. 13, 2006, Santos said that his service provider replaced his old fixed wireless broadband antenna with a new one, and the service seemed to have improved. But he soon found out that he was mistaken. So he decided to stop using the service, but he now owes the local service provider close to P5,300 for a service that did not deliver the kind of Internet connection he was promised.

ARE CONSUMER complaints about poor broadband connections in the Philippines falling on deaf ears?

Santos was not alone in his plight.

Another Laguna resident, Eriberto Gasmen Jr., echoed the sentiments of an unsatisfied subscriber. He subscribed to the service in September and was using the service without hitches. In November, however, problems with the service started, he said.

Subscribers have sent e-mail to the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) to air their complaints in December but have yet to receive feedback.

NTC Deputy Commissioner Jorge Sarmiento told Infotech that the agency has not received complaints related to the Smart Wifi service. The NTC is currently the agency mandated to oversee the telecommunications industry but it is not clear whether newer services, such as Smart Wifi still fall under their mandate.

The NTC was scheduled Friday to hold a dialogue between consumers, telecommunications companies, and other parties concerned at the agency.

The dialogue hopes to help NTC resolve some of the mounting consumer complaints related to various services offered by telecommunications companies, Sarmiento said.

Another subscriber, Razel Saranillo, said that she had no Internet connection for a month after subscribing to the service in October 2005.

"*Madalas walang* Internet (We often don't have wireless Internet connection). I have no choice but to subscribe because the DSL (wireline broadband Internet) service is not available to us. I've written the customer care of Smart and they have yet to give my rebate for no Internet connection for a month," she added.

Infotech has received more e-mail messages, all coming from unsatisfied subscribers of the Smart Wifi service.

Local bloggers were also quick to expose this recent problem, creating long threads of discussions.

Pinoytechblog, a group blog of the local high-tech scene in the Philippines, was among the local blogs that generated extensive discussion on the service. One post indicated that users have "mixed receptions" about the service. The thread can be read at http://www.pinoytechblog.com/archives/smart-wifi-get-mixed-reception.

About the same month that Smart Wifi subscribers started reporting their problems, Lopez-owned Bayan Telecommunications (Bayantel) experienced problems with its digital subscriber line (DSL) and dial-up Internet services, leading to a major outage in Quezon City.

Marlon Arada, Bayantel head of corporate development and interim head of corporate communications, at that time said that Bayantel's DSL and dial-up services went down because of a problem related to an equipment failure.

"It is the same equipment, the ECN in Diliman, that caused the problem," Arada said in an interview. The Bayantel executive blamed the company's equipment supplier, adding that every downtime costs the company.

"We have a service level agreement with customers,

CONSUMERS/ B2-2

iBlog, iPodcast: Citizen journalism using technology

By Leo Magno

(Second of four parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

AS WE DISCUSS BLOGS AND podcasting, other terms like "citizen journalism" and "grassroots journalism" inevitably crop up. Dan Gillmor who left the San Jose Mercury News in late 2004 to pursue his passion for "citizen media," defined the term as "the idea that anyone with something to say could use increasingly powerful and decreasingly expensive tools to say it, potentially for a global audience."

We are seeing ordinary citizens reaching out to millions without the need to operate or buy air time from broadcasting stations. We are seeing them create electronic magazines without the need to operate a printing press. With inexpensive tools using a computer and an Internet connection, these citizens are becoming publishers and broadcasters themselves.

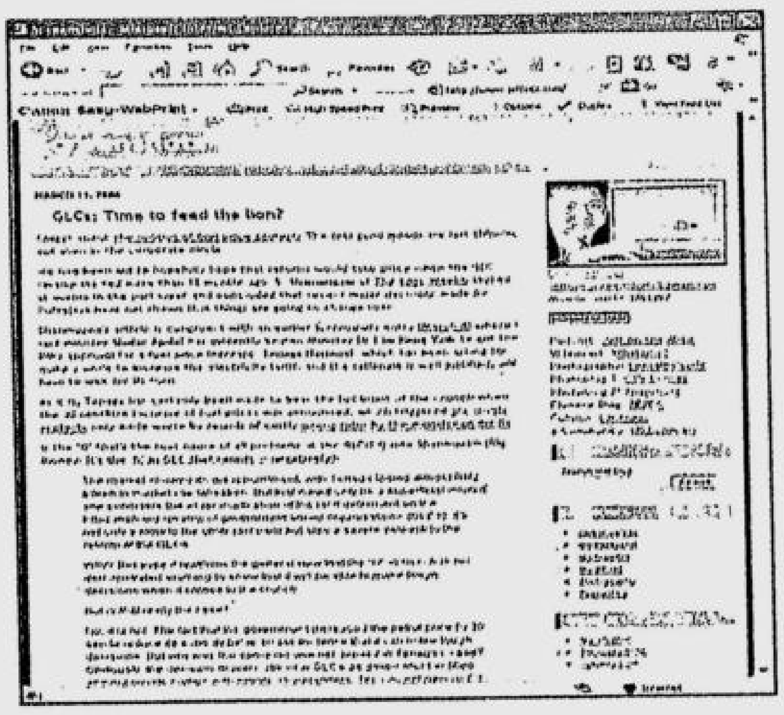
So the questions now arise: Will inexpensive alternative media like blogs and podcasts pave the way for grassroots or citizen journalism to finally flourish? What brought about this movement into grassroots new media publishing? What are the technologies and concepts involved? How will these affect media as we know it?

Poynter Institute senior editor Steve Outing said that new media such as blogs are key tools for aspiring citizen journalists. He said a "great way to get citizens involved in news... is to simply invite them to blog for it. A number of news sites do this now, and some citizen blogs are consistently interesting reads."

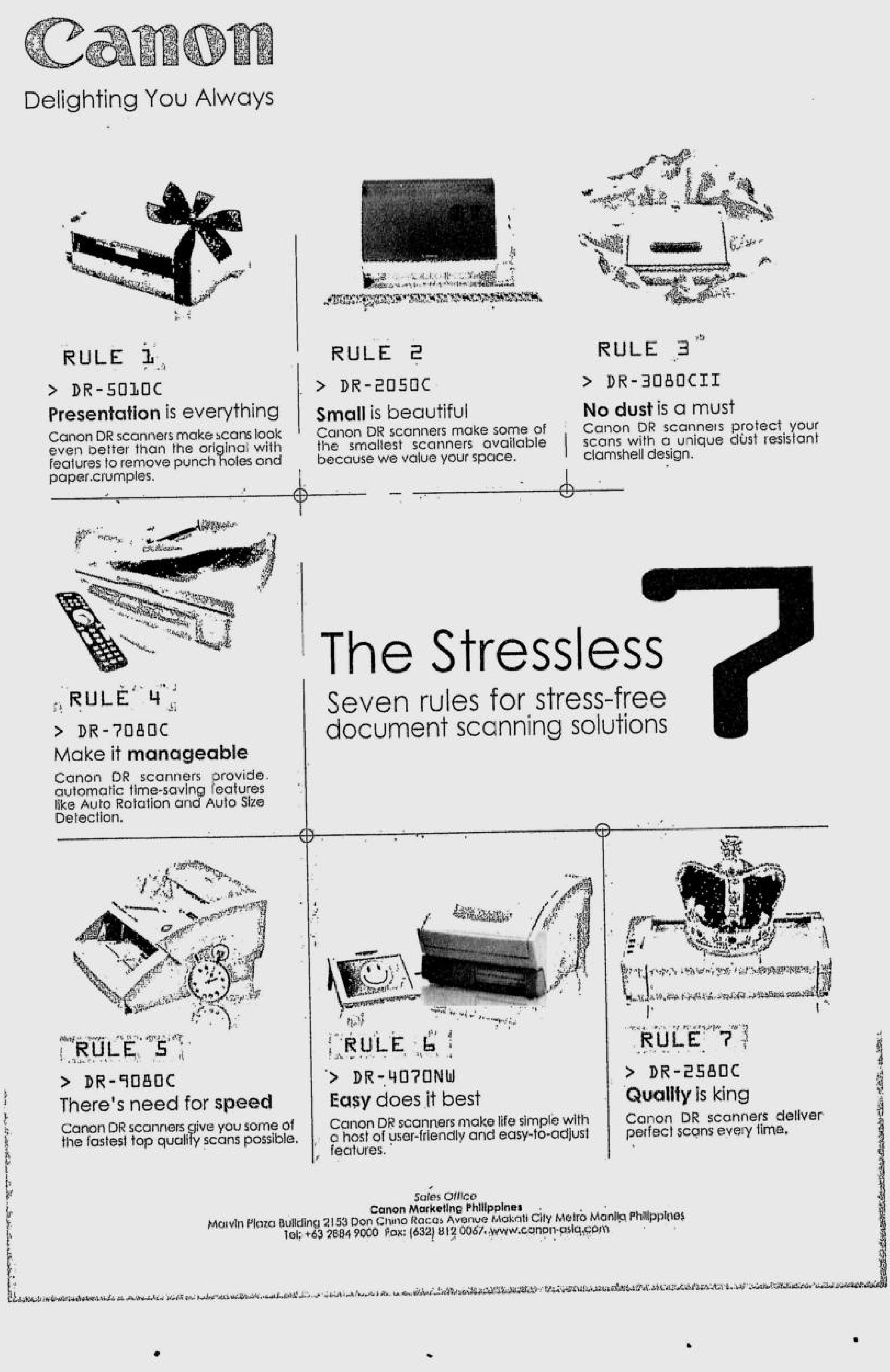
The Poynter Institute calls itself a "school for journalists, future journalists and teachers of journalists." The institute has been issuing guidelines on how traditional media could more easily accommodate advances in media technologies like blogging and podcasting and use them to gather views from the grassroots.

"Blogging started out as an everyman phenomenon (and now, it seems, almost everyone has a blog), but then professional journalists took up the form, too. But the real promise of blogs remains with the non-journalists, for whom blogging

IBLOG/ B2-3


GLCs: Time to feed the lion?

SCREENSHOTS by Jeff Ooi has received the ire of the Malaysian government and the ruling party-owned newspaper New Straits Times. His only tool: A blog, which incidentally won the Freedom Blog Awards of the Reporters Without Borders. An advertising analyst, Ooi is not a trained journalist.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RP firms investing in business intelligence

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

IN 2003, THE BUREAU OF Internal Revenue (BIR) was able to discover close to P80 billion of undeclared value added tax (VAT) from businesses.

Thanks to a software technology called "business intelligence" and a business intelligence task force within the agency, the BIR was able to sift through third-party information and its own database and turn it into useful information. This helped agency go after businesses and collect P7 billion to P8 billion of the P80 billion of undeclared VAT, according to Annie Reyes, head revenue executive assistant of the BIR Information System Development Service.

The BIR are among the many local organizations now using business intelligence software vendor, according to SAS, a supplier of business intelligence software to the agency.

Apart from the BIR, Philippine commercial banks Equitable PCIBank and Metrobank, and telephone company Globe Telecom, are now investing in business intelligence software to make better decisions.

In a nutshell, business intelligence software is used to turn enterprise data into useful information that allows companies make better decisions. It allows enterprises to also better understand their customers, giving them a single-view of their market.

In the case of BIR, the government agency is now moving toward predicting its future revenue collections from specific industries.

Reyes said that business intelligence software is now allowing the agency to simulate scenarios and statistically predict how much revenues are expected to be collected in a given time.

"We do have the capability to [do predictive analysis] now," added Reyes, noting that the agency is now establishing "benchmarks" that would eventually allow them to predict revenue collections.

Currently, revenue collections of the agency are dictated by the Department of Finance and Congress, the BIR officials said.

Local telephone company Globe Telecom is also among the early users of business intelligence software to predict customer churn, according to Sonny Halili, managing director of SAS Philippines.

Halili said that SAS is also expecting more retail companies to start investing in business intelligence solution this year to better understand their customers.

SAS has 50 clients in the Philippines, mostly coming from the financial, telecommunications, and public sectors. Interestingly, the software vendor's earliest client is the International Rice Research Institute, a research and development organization based in the Philippines.

"Many Philippine companies have no long-term strategy for business intelligence. But Philippine companies also face the same issues as any organization in the world. I don't think this country lags behind other countries in terms of adopting business intelligence," added Don Cooper-William, marketing and alliances director in Asia Pacific of SAS Institute Australia Pty. Ltd.

Consumers suffer from poor broadband service

From page B2-1

which provides rebates to big customers," Arada said, adding that the company's network was in good shape. "We're confident about our network. We won't be launching our marketing on our DSL services if we cannot back [it] up with a good network," he said.

He added that Bayantel is looking at investing "millions of dollars" to provide a backup network for its DSL and dial-up services to prevent future downtimes and loss of business.

This was not the first time Bayantel has been plagued by such technical problems, as customers of its DSL service have repeatedly been complaining, according to the customer service center of Bayantel.

Smart and Bayantel's customer service center were often unreachable at the time consumer problems mounted. The customer service hotline of Bayantel remained busy and could not be reached due to the volume of calls they received from customers complaining about the downtime in January. Smart Wifi subscribers had problems calling up the company's customer support services. If they did, they are often given the same spiel, or worse—nothing—that could ease their pain.

To date, Bayantel DSL subscribers in Quezon City have been complaining about dropped or intermittent Internet connection.

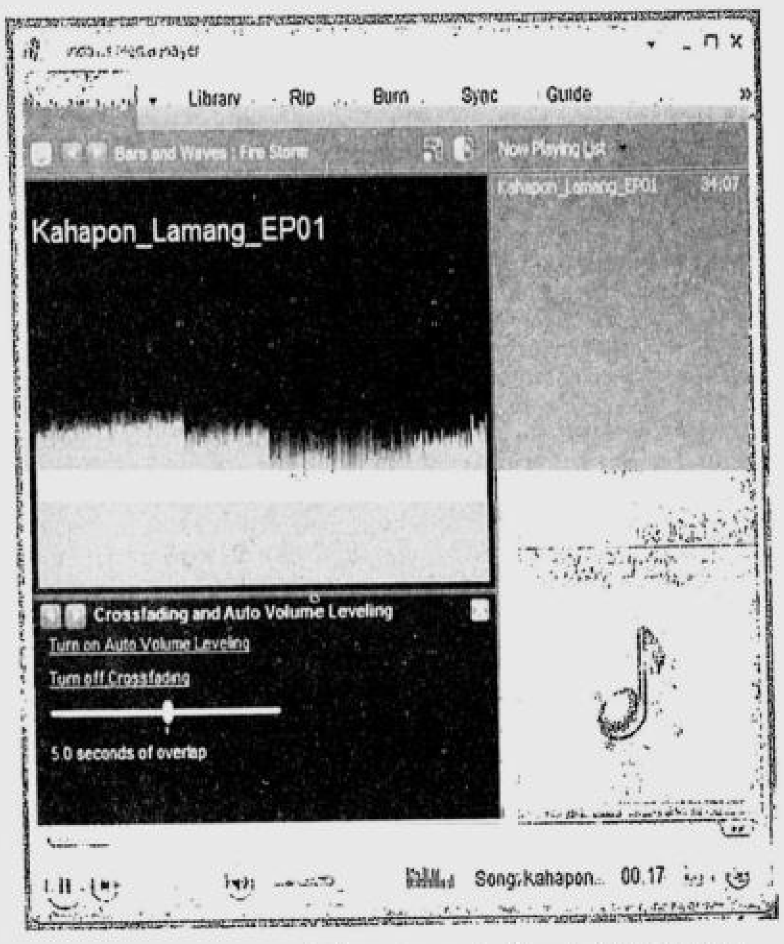
Smart Communications public affairs head Ramon Isberto acknowledged that the operator's new fixed wireless broadband service launched last year was having problems because it was part of the service's "birth pains."

"The challenge for us right now is that we have to deal with another level of complexity of this new service. However, as we do this, we also like to address the different cases individually. And we intend to make this process [birth pains] as short as possible," Isberto said.

The Smart spokesperson also said that the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. Group has created a new position, a consumer affairs director who will now deal with all consumer issues and problems related to the services of all the telephone company's subsidiaries, including Smart.

"We do need to raise the quality of customer service," Isberto admitted, noting that Smart is now working on enhancing the technical capabilities of its technical support personnel.

It is also planning to outsource some of its customer care operations, the Smart executive added.



AT 71, former senator and pioneering radio show host Eddie Ilarde has experienced a renaissance of sorts by turning his "Kahapon Lamang" radio show into a podcast.

Menardo Jimenez, head for wireless consumer division of Smart Communications, said that the "quality of service" issues marring Smart Wifi and other newer services of the PLDT group has more to do with the unpredictable boom of demand for broadband services in the Philippines.

"A lot of the QOS (quality of service) issues you're seeing are related to the explosion of the demand. As much as we want to predict the demand for broadband—we predicted this much capacity—but after we launched it, boom! The failure lies in not being able to predict the success of a product. We really don't want to shortchange the customers," Jimenez added.

Before PLDT decided to name a high-level executive to handle consumer affairs, Jimenez said that PLDT had to backtrack on some low-cost call promos and broadband Internet services where the demand just exceeded their expectations.

"Conventionally, you would think that to double the subscribers, you need to double capacity. If you would look at that data two years ago, it was a logical conclusion. But that is not we're seeing today. In the last six months, if we double the subscribers, we have to increase capacity four times. We now see that from actual experience. We now make the corresponding adjustments," the Smart executive said.

Jimenez said that the Smart Wifi is an example of new technologies, products and services going through birth pains.

William Torres, president of the Philippine Internet Service Organization and a veteran in the Philippine information technology industry, noted that consumers inherently occupy the bottom of the food chain, in terms of the quality of service they receive from service providers.

Compared to more premium subscribers, such as enterprises and large companies, consumers should not expect the same quality of service given to the bigger companies.

Some of the subscriber complaints on the Smart Wifi service have reached the Department of Trade and Industry's Bureau of Trade Regulations and Consumer Protection, according to Dita Maralit, director for special concerns of the DTI.

However, staff at the Bureau of Trade Regulations and Consumer Protection said that consumer concerns related to "Internet services" do not fall under their jurisdiction.

"We have endorsed this with the NTC," one staff told Infotech.

The Bureau of Trade Regulations and Consumer Protection had been receiving complaints from the same persons over the past few weeks since December, the government staff added.

"We usually deal with defective products. In case of services, such as those from Internet companies and telephone companies, it will be better to coordinate with the National Telecommunications Commission—they have jurisdiction over Internet services," the government staff said.

Anthony Ian Cruz, spokesperson of the Philippine consumer group .TXTPower, acknowledged that there is no built-in consumer protection in a deregulated industry, such as telecommunications.

While the group is already moving to help consumers air their problems to the proper agencies through an online consumer complaint service, Cruz said that the telephone companies and other service providers can sell substandard service because they control the industry.

"I am a subscriber of Smart Wifi and the service stinks. If there is a problem, I have to call a number. Nobody knows how to solve my problems and most of the call center agents don't know how to help me. We intend to put up an online complaint center in order to gather the complaints and refer them to proper agencies," Cruz said.

Cruz said that the Philippine government has a "hands-off" policy when it comes to dealing with consumer issues in a deregulated environment.

"There is no built-in consumer protection in such an environment," he said.

Sadly, there is also a weak consumer rights movement in the Philippines. Cruz said that the last time consumer groups came together to push their rights was during the emergence of plans to meter phone calls.

In the meantime, consumers like Mark Gerald Santos have to accept their painful plight of having to pay for services from companies that have failed to deliver on their promises.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis Street, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines
Telephones (632) 5513438 • 5513454 • Facsimile (632) 5513436
E-mail: info@peza.gov.ph • Website: www.peza.gov.ph

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), through its Corporate Operating Budget for CY 2006 intends to apply the sum of PhP6,000,000.00 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Supply and Delivery of One (1) Unit Brand New Boom Truck. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

The PEZA now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the *Supply and Delivery of One (1) Unit Brand New Boom Truck*. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/ sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last three (3) years with an amount of at least 50% of the ABC. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from 06 to 17 March 2006, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of PhP3,000.00 and submission of a certified copy of their G-EPS Certificate of Registration. The method of payment will be cash basis only. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The PEZA will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on 22 March 2006, 2:00 p.m. at the 6th Floor, Social Hall, PEZA Building, Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before 11:00 a.m. of 03 April 2006. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of GSIS Surety Bond in the amount of not less than 2.5% of the ABC or in the form of cash, certified check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit in the amount of not less than *1% of the ABC*. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Bid opening shall be on 03 April, 2006, 2:00 p.m. at the 6th Floor Social Hall, PEZA Bldg., Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidder's representatives who choose to attend.

In case any of the above dates is declared a special non-working holiday, it will automatically be reset on the next working day.

The PEZA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the Bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat
3/F PEZA Building Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City
Tel. No. 891-6444/ Telefax No. 551-9587
e-mail: peza_bac_secretariat@yahoo.com
website: www.peza.gov.ph

BAC Chairman

(PDI – March 6 & 13, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
CITY OF BAIS
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The City Government of Bais invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and delivery of the hereunder requirements:

ITEM	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (ABC)
1) PR# 127-06 - various construction materials for Concreting of Mabini Street (Phase I)	P 1,623,020.00
2) PR # 130-06 - various construction materials for concreting of Mabini Street (Phase II)	1,601,740.00
3) PR # 131-06 - various construction materials for Concreting of Juan Luna Street	1,761,268.00
TOTAL	P 4,986,028.00

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

In order to qualify, bidders should conform to the eligibility criteria as prescribed under Sec. 23.11 of the IRR-A of R.A. 9184.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria as specified in the IRR-A of R.A. 9184. As such non-submission of the required documents will result in the disqualification of the bidder.

All other particulars relative to the procurement process shall be govern by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9184 otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

Pre-bid conference will be conducted at the Office of the City Mayor, this city, on **March 24, 2006** at 1:30 P.M.

Bid documents can be obtained upon payment of a non-refundable fee equivalent to the total amount of the ABC of the items in which interested bidders intend to bid, in accordance with the following rates:

Below P 50,000.00	- 0.5% but not less than P 100.00
P 50,000.00 but not more than P 100,000.00	- 0.45% but not less than P 250.00
P 100,001.00 but not more than P 200,000.00	- 0.4% but not less than P 450.00
P 200,001.00 - P 350,000.00	- 0.35% but not less than P 800.00
P 350,001.00 - P 500,000.00	- 0.3% but not less than 1,225.00
P 500,001.00 - P 1,000,000.00	- 0.2% but not less than P 1,500.00
P 1,000,001.00 and above	- 0.1% but not less than P 2,000.00 and not more than P 10,000.00

Bid documents can be obtained at the BAC Secretariat c/o Office of the City Mayor or Office of the City General Services, this City, Tel. Nos. (035) 402-3182, or 402-8115, anytime during office hours, and can also be inquired for further information or particulars.

The bidders shall drop their duly accomplished eligibility, technical and financial documents each in separate sealed envelopes duly marked as such in the bid box at the Conference Room at the Office of the City Mayor on **March 30, 2006** at 1:30 P.M. at which place, date and time said envelopes shall be opened in the presence of the members of the BAC, the attending bidders, the observers, or their duly authorized representative. Late bids shall not be accepted.

The City Government of Bais reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at anytime prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

(Sgd.) CARMELINO L. MORALES
(City General Services Officer)
BAC Chairman

(PDI--March 8 & 13, 2006)

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY WATER DISTRICT
263 Rizal Avenue, Puerto Princesa City
Tel. Nos. 433-2408, 433-5032, 433-6802
Fax No. (48) 433-6803

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Puerto Princesa City Water District through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project.

Name of the Project	Supply and Delivery of One (1) Unit Fighter Water Tanker (Japan Surplus) or equivalent
Location	Puerto Princesa City Water District
Brief Description	One (1) Unit Fighter Water Tanker (Japan Surplus) or equivalent powered by 6 cylinder diesel engine, 6 wheelers, manual transmission, 6 cubic meter water tank, original Japan stainless equipped with standard hose with roller, 900 x 200 with one spare, 8 stud bolts, brand new batteries and complete standard tools
Approved Budget for the Contract	Six Hundred Thousand Pesos (P600,000.00)
Delivery Period	Thirty (30) Calendar Days from the receipt of the Notice to Proceed.

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least fifty percent (50%) of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/ Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR)

ACTIVITIES	SCHEDULE
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	March 7, 2006 to March 14, 2006
2. Pre-Bid Conference	March 15, 2006, 1:30 PM PPCWD Board Room
3. Deadline for Submission of Bids	March 28, 2006 1:30 P.M. PPCWD Board Room
4. Opening of Bids	March 28, 2006 1:30 P.M. PPCWD Board Room

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of non-refundable amount of Five Hundred Pesos (Php 500.00) to the Puerto Princesa City Water District Cashier.

The Puerto Princesa City Water District assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid

Approved by:
(Sgd.) Engr. VICENTE D. ABRE
PPCWD BAC Chairman
(PDI - Mar 6 & 13, 2006)

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Housing Authority invites prospective developers/ proponents contractors who have undertaken design, finance, construction and development of similar projects to enter and undertake the proposed 24,161-square meter **NAMRIA EMPLOYEES MEDIUM RISE HOUSING PROJECT** located in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila.

The said project entails the preparation of feasibility studies, design, preparation of plans and drawings, securing of the necessary permits and licenses, provision of funding, and the construction and marketing of completed medium rise housing units to benefit qualified employees of the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA)

A. Checklist of requirements for eligibility of the joint venture developers/ partners and other pertinent documents relative thereto are available for examination upon submission of a letter of intent addressed to the Chairman, Inter-agency Bids and Awards Committee for the NAMRIA Employees MRH Project, National Housing Authority and may be obtained upon payment of a non-refundable fee of PhP 500.00 at the NHA-NCR Area Management Office, 3rd Floor, NHA Main Building, Diliman, Quezon City not later than **March 20, 2006**. The BAC Secretariat may be contacted at Tel. Nos. 928-4561 Local 181 and 182.

B. Deadline of submission of eligibility documents is on **March 21, 2006** not later than 5:00 o'clock p.m. at the Office of the Assistant General Manager.

C. All eligible bidders shall be informed later on the date of issuance of the project's Terms of Reference and other bid documents, which shall be made available only upon payment of a non-refundable fee of PhP 5,000.00.

D. Prospective developers/partners shall be evaluated based on financial and technical capability, experience, and track record. Proposal shall be selected based on the architectural and engineering design, project amenities, selling prices, marketing plan and project duration.

E. The NHA reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive formalities on any defects therein, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Government

(Sgd.) FROILAN R. KAMPITAN
Assistant General Manager, NHA
Chairman, Inter-agency Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - March 6 & 13, 2006)

iBlog, iPodcast: Citizen journalism using technology

From page B2-1

has given a powerful and inexpensive publishing tool to reach out to the world with their stories and thoughts," Outing said.

However, blogging and podcasting are still budding technologies, which makes it even more interesting why government and corporate entities want to nip them in the bud. Ronald Meinardus, resident representative of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in the Philippines and a commentator on Asian affairs, said there are about 24 million blogs and 20,000 podcasts out there.

Meinardus calls them "digital grassroots communicators" and that "real political power and influence is now being wielded through online communities comprising millions of people."

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation proclaims that it is dedicated to liberalism, where key ingredients are individual freedom and active participation of citizens to become aware of their rights. With its own podcast (http://www.fnf.org.ph/podcast/) it is encouraging individuals to join the public sphere using technology.

"As with weblogs, the great majority of podcasts are produced and hosted in North America," said Meinardus. "This approach—which shrinks the gap between creator and consumer—poses a major challenge for traditional media companies, which are increasingly having a hard time attracting the young generation. Instead of reading newspapers or arranging their schedules around TV shows, more and more young people in advanced societies are flocking to so-called online communities."

So here we see digital and personal counterparts of the print medium with blogs, and a digital and personal counterpart of TV and radio with podcasts. Whereas before, the cost of printing and publishing news was prohibitive, individual citizens are now blogging their own news and views. Whereas before, the cost of broadcasting your own radio or TV show was prohibitive or nigh-impossible, individual citizens can now podcast. This development is changing not only the face but also the very definition of the word "media." We are moving into personalized content produced by the end-users themselves and into newer forms of media, and some of these are becoming influential.

"We're seeing a shift from mass media to 'my media' where the user is the programmer and creator of content. Consumers are becoming the producers of content," said Yahoo! Inc. chairman and CEO Terry Semel in an interview at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Semel recalled an incident when a series of coordinated suicide bombings occurred in the streets of London on July 7, 2005. This, he said, showed that "citizen journalism was really alive and well."

"People right there in the middle of the action started taking photos from their cell phones and giving updates on their blogs," he said. "These updates from professional journalists and even just plain old bystanders became available almost immediately. Some photo updates were even posted on their blogs faster than the news networks."

Such content is called "tail content or user-generated content," where tens of thousands of consumers generate information for niche markets to form a long line of "de-massified" content. De-massified content refers to information that is tailored for or targeted at specific individuals as opposed to having just one message being broadcast to a mass audience base.

During a media technology roundtable in Sydney, Australia, next-generation futurist and strategic media analyst Andrew Zolli echoed what Semel said.

"The distinction between who is the consumer and who is the producer of information is dissolving in the participation economy," the New York executive said. "There is a shift from people seeing themselves as information consumers to participants and we will see this social change transform media. These people are now becoming 'professional amateurs.' In the 19th century an 'amateur' was defined as a person who does something out of love or devotion while back then a 'professional' was someone who does it for money. These people will increasingly participate online and change many economies, not just that of media."

At the same media roundtable in Sydney, Mauro Montanaro, vice president for multimedia of Nokia, gave an even more extreme view on new media and traditional media.

"This is the death of journalism as we know it," he said. "During the Afghan war 10 years ago people with big, clunky videophones sent reports back to their newsrooms. Today you can do that with a cell phone. During the Paris riots, people were taking pictures and blogging using their cell phones. Today it's the immediacy of the news that matters. People's attention spans are getting shorter, so content is also getting shorter and more straight-to-the-point."

Earlier, the analogy between blogs and the print medium and podcasts with broadcasting was made. The prohibitive costs of printing and broadcasting, new media advocates say, have all but disappeared. Now anyone can be a reporter and editor or a broadcast announcer and producer at the same time.

New media users like Ooi even present more provocative views—that the incumbency of traditional journalists is being challenged by new media producers who have no background in the field of journalism.

"When it comes to opinion, it's the senior editor who calls the shots," said Ooi. "But now, anybody who has a tiny inkling of how to use the technology can share their opinion. This is where the incumbency of journalists has been challenged. You have serious bloggers who blog ahead of news and have strong interactive mechanisms with learned and informed people. I think that is where the entire domain which used to belong to journalists starts to collapse or is being eroded."

This statement obviously would not sit well with journalists in traditional media. Although many professional journalists have already embraced blogging and podcasting, others are more prudent in making the conclusion that ordinary citizens would, indeed, become tomorrow's journalists. The sticking point: Accuracy.

"As a person who once studied statistics, I would always look at the validity of the facts presented by the bloggers and podcasters. It can be a viable source of information, but corroboration is necessary," said Zatni Arbi, reporter of The Jakarta Post.

As with traditional media, accuracy has always been the focal point of journalism. Arbi said one benefit that could be derived from the emergence of citizen journalists using new media is that readers would learn to be more discerning when it comes to accepting information from any source.

Inevitably, the question of accuracy gives birth to more issues like credibility.

"I believe the market will determine the credibility of the bloggers and podcasters," he said. "In this case, it is not much different from the traditional media. The good thing about the Internet and the new media is that they teach people to be more critical in what they read, and to add a grain of salt in the dish."

Radio and television show producer and host Jerry Liao agreed.

"Credibility will come into play," said Liao. "If the blogs, podcasts and videocasts will be done by news organizations or prominent personalities, then readers will accept them as reliable. But by saying that, you can expect readers and listeners will still verify the story from legitimate news sources that they have relied upon for a long time."

Liao added that most respected journalists and news organizations worked for years to earn the credibility they enjoy today. No matter how fast technology facilitates media production, he said, credibility is not something that is built overnight.

"The make or break of informal reports will again depend on the credibility of the writer and its content," Liao said. "Becoming a viable source of info does not come overnight. Continuous availability of reliable info will be critical. Having one or two good stories won't do it."

Another TV journalist, this time from Indonesia, agreed with Liao.

"Most people who use the Internet are educated people. I guess they will not easily believe in everything they read on the Internet especially in blogs that are owned by somebody they don't even know. They will cross-check the information from a reputable source. The story of a blogger who has no journalistic training will not get a reader," said Indra Prawira of MetroTV PT Media Televisi Indonesia.

Prawira does not believe individual bloggers and podcasters will become part of the mainstream in the future.

"In Indonesia? I don't think so," he said. "Even the Internet is not well recognized here. Globally? Could be. We need other sources to get confirmation of what the blog tells us. We, Indonesian people hardly consider blogs or even the Internet as a source of information."

And with credibility, the question of accountability in new media also arises.

"New media, to me, offers a wider choice to the consumers of information, but there is no one to be held responsible for the validity of the content," said The Jakarta Post's Arbi.

This, he said, even emphasizes the need for editors to be on top of the information flow.

"Because there is no board of editors to hold responsible for the content that a citizen journalist offers, it is easier to challenge him," said Arbi the reporter.

Shawn Chung, editor-in-chief of T3 Singapore, said ethics set journalists apart from bloggers.

"Journalism training is not about how to write the proper prose, how to report an incident using the 5W method, how to construct an article using the pyramid system of priority," he said. "It's also about proper ethics and guidelines. Bloggers feel that they can get away with infantile slander, hearsay, etc. They are simply unprofessional as journalists, and a lot of them don't want to adopt proper procedures."

Chung, who does not see blogs and podcasts becoming part of mainstream media in the next five years, added that bloggers in Singapore are "immature."

"From the Singapore experience, bloggers here are naive in the sense that they feel empowered to post what they want, when they want," he said. "I think these new forms of media have very narrow focuses, and very narrow agendas behind them. This is not citizen journalism. If so, it's a very yellow form of citizen journalism, with few exceptions. It's proven that in the Singapore experience, bloggers here are too immature to even attempt to rival mainstream journalism."

Accuracy, credibility and accountability. How would bloggers and podcasters satisfy these prerequisites of becoming a reliable source of information? Do bloggers and podcasters see themselves as journalists at all?

A man who sits on both sides of the fence is Eddie Ilarde. A radio and television announcer before he became a Philippine senator, Ilarde has experienced a renaissance of sorts. He is a pioneer radio announcer and a lifetime achievement awardee for both radio and television. And at 71, Ilarde has started podcasting (http://www.microwarehouse.com.ph/podcast/podcast.php), so he knows how it is to be part of the traditional broadcasting system and how to utilize the novel methods offered by new media.

The veteran Ilarde, who became famous for his radio-turned-television program called "Kahapon Lamang," said new media reporters may have something to offer that traditional ones do not. He said a stronger sense of community among podcasters serves as a check-and-balance mechanism for podcasts.

"Yes, any Tom, Dick and Harry can do this (podcasting), but only those who talk sense will survive," Ilarde said. "There are millions of people broadcasting on the Internet, and this is good and bad at the same time. It's not a direct broadcast. Podcasts can be accessed by those who want to hear the podcast. And people on the Internet can check each other. Listeners are podcasters and podcasters are listeners; they check and balance each other."

Ilarde added that the professional rat race in media and the constant goal to top the competition may cause professional journalists to stray from the service-oriented job they are supposed to perform.

"Newscasters are already paid," he said. "They are paid to do what they do. Amateurs are there to give you information because of passion to do it. They are not professionals but for all you know they could be better than us."

This brings to mind what future media analyst Zolli said about amateurs and professionals, that bloggers and podcasters are now becoming "professional amateurs." Zolli said that in the 19th century, an "amateur" was defined as a person who performs something out of love or devotion while back then a "professional" was someone who does it for money.

"Podcasts are not being broadcast by big networks like BBC or CNN or any other network. That is the point," Ilarde said. "(Podcasters) are accountable to their listeners. But when you have a radio or TV host, a so-called journalist being paid by a big network company who does not do his homework—that's a lot worse."

Hong Kong blogger Yan Sham-Shackleton said most of her entries are commentary in nature, but that she does go through the usual fact-checking procedure. She also believes there is a middle ground between the emerging new media and the traditional media, that blogs are not owned by any particular group of people and that in new media, typecasting and arbitrary labeling should be avoided. Yan Sham-Shackleton's blog is banned in mainland China for her continuing comments on the Tiananmen massacre.

"I don't think you need to have formal training to be a journalist," she said. "But you do need to have some sort of experience working with newspapers or magazines. What I do now in Glutter has no resemblance with what it is like to be a reporter or an editor. Reporting and being an editor is a skill set, you have to learn it and earn it. With this new technology, anyone can comment and report on events. They can be primary sources of information, they can be eyewitnesses, they can with a click of a button allow a lot of people to come and read their thoughts. But not everyone is a reporter. That said, anyone can own a blog so reporters can as well. Reporters can own a blog but not all blog owners are reporters."

Yan also encourages readers to be more discerning about any information they get from the Internet.

Malaysian blogger Jeff Ooi already has a sizeable following in his country, and he attributes this to verifying anything he writes.

"Even though I am not a named journalist or a trained journalist—I never was one—I do follow the professional ethics of journalists," Ooi said. "I use multi-sourcing, I go for independent sources, and I follow that to the 'T'. That helped me get the reputation of having a high level of integrity."

However, inasmuch as Yan and Ooi admit that strictly speaking they were never trained as journalists, even trained journalists make mistakes. Wouldn't it be more dangerous for non-trained people to act as reporters?

Untrained journalists that they are, neither Yan nor Ooi claim to be journalists in the first place.

"I am not a journalist, and most people with blogs are not either," said Yan. "Most blogs are more like a remote control. They simply lead other people to what journalists have written. I see myself as a cultural critic and writer than a reporter because I don't seek new information and then report it. On occasions I might talk about an event I experienced but always from a first-person point of view. I don't hide behind any kind of objectivity, or even a certain political paradigm. What I write is what I think, take it or leave it."

IBLOG/B2-4

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From page B2-3

Yan added: "I am not a blogger, I am a person who happens to have a blog."

Ooi said something similar.

"Essentially bloggers are not journalists," he said. "They are not trained as one but you are providing a grassroots perspective that would reflect the aspirations of the masses, and it's high time that the powers that be take cognizance of these voices. So with that we have an expansion whereby blogs will be an effective channel to project alternative views, not necessarily dissenting views."

For some podcasters, the processes which journalists go through were all thrown at them unwittingly until they realized that podcasting entailed journalistic training on the job. They had to hit the ground running and then realized the responsibility that goes with airing one's views.

"It is interesting," said Julian Yu, 44, producer of What's up in Taiwan, (http://feeds.feedburner.com/whatsupintaiwan) a podcast on news and issues in Taiwan. A lyricist for Mandarin pop songs, Yu has no background in journalism. "When I started editing the interviews for the first time, I felt like I was the censorship guy. What should and shouldn't I keep in the final cut? It bugged me for a while, and then later I realized that I was my own censor! I put my name there so I just do what I know, what I believe."

Similarly, 24-year-old Josh, who podcasts weekly from the basement of his home in Japan, does not see himself as a journalist.

"I do not consider myself a journalist," said Josh, an active duty sailor stationed at a coastal naval base in Japan. "My podcast is intended for a very niche audience. Bloggers in general do have the power to influence journalism, and some may be more qualified than today's average journalist. However, without the big daddy media backing, it's always going to be a hobby no matter how hard that blogger tries to break into mainstream."

Josh, who lives in Yokosuka with his wife and two daughters, has seen his podcast Josh in Japan (http://www.joshinjapan.com/) gain a sizeable audience after discussing topics such as health care and crime and punishment in the land of the rising sun. He calls himself an "average navy guy" who likes the cartoon shows "The Simpsons," "The Family Guy" and Tom Clancy novels. However, this average navy guy has been cited by WIRED magazine and by Japanese media as an influential and innovative new online source of information about Japan. Despite this, however, Josh believes the two worlds of new media and traditional media will never meet.

"Podcasting will never break out into mainstream media," he said. "When we only have one almost-forgotten celebrity pushing podcasting to the masses, it's not going to work out as a publicist would want it. If we had many different well-known celebrities and news sources explaining podcasting on the evening news every night, that might make it more into the mainstream. We need more publicity and positive press. Until then, podcasting will never flourish as it needs to." *(To be continued next week)*

Dell founder to visit RP

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

MICHAEL DELL, FOUNDER and chair of the board of computer maker Dell Inc. and one of the world's richest men, is scheduled to visit the Philippines this month.

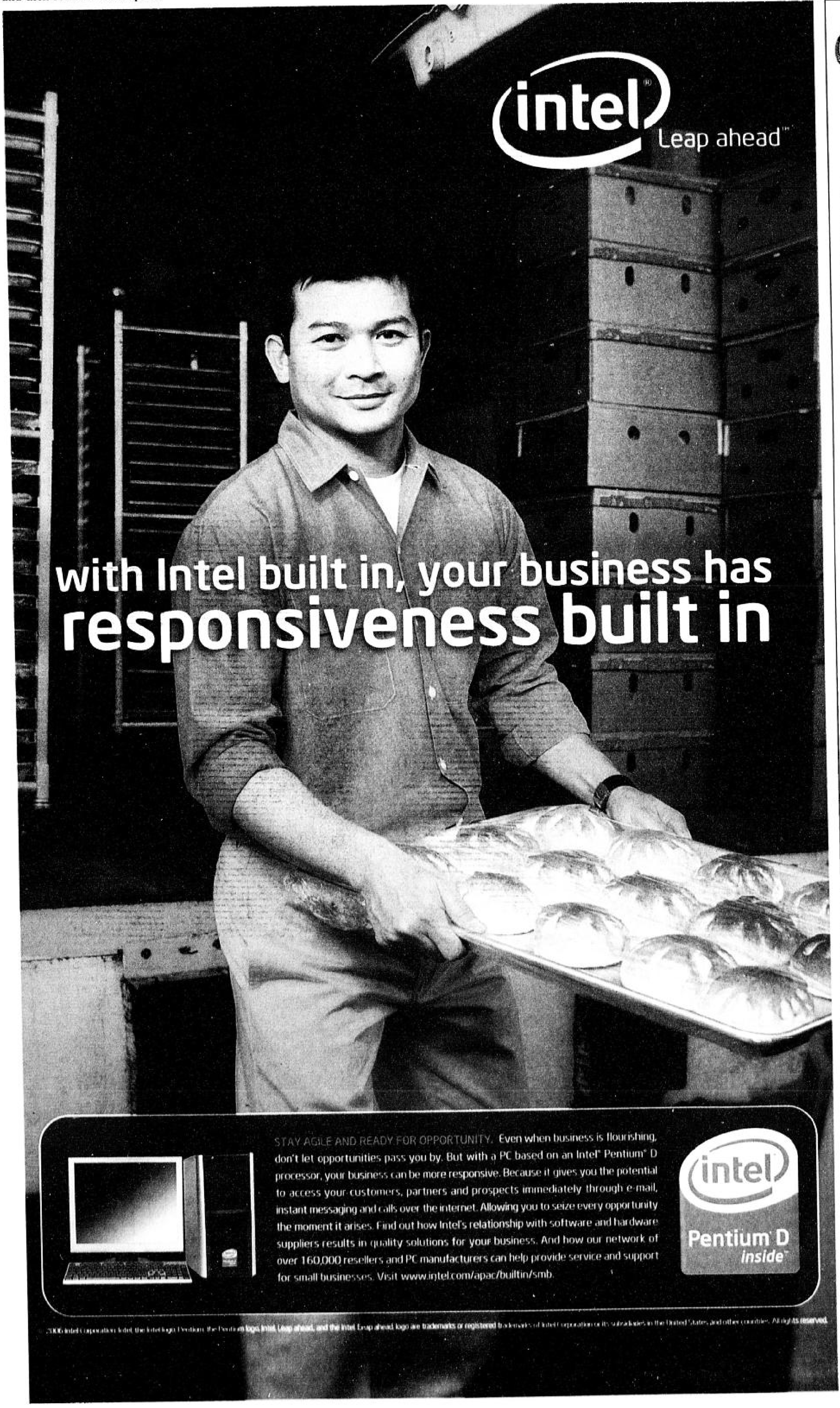
Dell will launch the company's global customer center facility housed in the SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City on March 21. Dell Philippines has announced earlier that it has opened its 145,000-square-foot contact center facility in the Philippines, which now houses 167 agents. It is expected to employ about 700 contact center agents.

"Dell chose the Philippines for its newest contact center primarily because of the strong language and communication skills of its workforce and a robust telecommunications infrastructure," the company had said in a statement.

While the company has yet to disclose its total investments in the Philippines, it noted that it was making "unprecedented investments" in service and support services for its customers worldwide.

"Dell is now a premier tenant in the new SM Mall of Asia complex and expects the location and its extensive amenities to be a competitive edge for attracting the area's most qualified job candidates," the company added.

Born in 1965 in Houston, Texas, Dell founded Dell Inc. from his dormitory room in the University of Texas in Austin. He decided to leave college at 19 and, with help from his grandparents, ran his company full-time.



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PLANNING YOUR TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

Last year there were 632,800 new SMBs in the Asia Pacific region. SMBs now realize that information technology (IT) is no longer a luxury but an imperative. Today Asian SMBs are investing more than ever on IT ($84 billion last year).[1] In this competitive marketplace you must look at the opportunities technology brings or you will lag behind.

Despite increasing IT investment, many SMBs still fall into a classic trap of poor IT planning. Under pressure to increase sales, drive up operational efficiency, and improve customer satisfaction, technology planning often falls to the wayside. There is a tendency to use technology that works "well enough," and leave it at that. However, technology will not wait for you, and neither will your competitors. A well-planned IT strategy that translates into financial benefits is now a business imperative.

Careful selection and maintenance of technology that fits your company's needs is essential. No matter what level of technology you use, if you haven't updated it in the last 2 or 3 years your system is probably in need of an overhaul. Better IT planning will give you more time to do the job you are best at: running your business.

Recognizing the IT ROI - The Business Benefits of SMBs

The presence of a computer where there wasn't one before can have startling consequences. PCs can improve employee productivity by equipping your staff with enhanced responsiveness to take on the increasingly greater demands of today's multitasking small business environment.

Finding Your Way Through the Upgrade Maze

Whether you have only one PC or an advanced network, a computer influences an employee's performance more than any other part of your technology system.

Regardless of the brand that you choose, technologies should be current. The optimum lifecycle of a desktop PC is three years and notebooks two. After this period, maintenance and upgrade can cost more than replacing the PC! It may sound too hard, but without scheduling regular updates, companies tend to practice a "crash and burn" approach to IT maintenance. By replacing computers only when they fail, they not only miss out on the productivity gains of more current computers, they may also wind up with dozens of different hardware configurations and out-of-date software, costing more in ongoing maintenance.

According to Gartner analyst Jackie Fenn, companies that fall back on a reactive 'as needed' approach in their adoption of new technologies run the risk of making costly, personality-driven choices, rather than tactical decisions that align with their larger corporate strategy and goals.[2]

Upgrading a computer, like adding a video card, can be a valuable way to customize it to your employee needs. However, extending a computer's life purely by swapping components is a poor strategy in the long run. From a short-term cost standpoint, you may add new hardware components to your computers. But if you factor in the cost of labor, the distraction from core responsibilities, the decreased reliability of the new system and additional problems with maintenance, it makes more sense to purchase a new PC with much more powerful hardware and peripherals that can better fulfill your business needs.

Moreover, newer technology has many hidden benefits. For example, new processors coupled with multi-tasking technology, such as Intel® Pentium® D processor supporting Hyper-Threading Technology, allow users to run multiple tasks simultaneously, therefore improving employees' productivity.

Sorting Out the Resource Mismatch

In an effort to simplify and standardize technology systems, many companies give their employees computers that do not correspond to their tasks. Workers on the road may primarily use laptops such as those one Intel® Centrino® Duo, or office employees may rely on desktops. Having a technology system that is tailored to your employees needs is just as important as having up to date technology.

Who's Serving the Server, Then?

As your company's IT needs grow, you will need a way for multiple users to share computer applications and information. Simply put, you need a server. Many small companies will attempt to sidestep this need by running server software on a powerful PC. For what they save in cost, they pay for in reduced reliability, security, and speed.

Having a PC server crash at a crucial moment is almost certainly more costly than investing in a real server. A server is a significant investment, but they come in different sizes and can be tailored to your company's needs. Reliable real servers, like those based on the Intel® Xeon® processor, need significantly less maintenance time than a PC running server software. It also uses Hyper-Threading technology and is significantly more reliable than non-server dedicated processors.

Maintaining a small technology system might seem like an easy job; and with the right technology, it is. It always helps to look for new ways to improve your technology system as it can increase your competitive edge in the long run.

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[1] *"Pacific SMBs Spent over 84 Billion on IT-Excluding Telecom-, Last Year, Added "32,000 New Businesses and AMI-Partners Predicts Explosive Growth in Next Five Years," Business Wire, Inc. March 11, 2004*

[2] *http://www.computerworld.com/managementtopics/roi/story/0,10801,84342,00.html*

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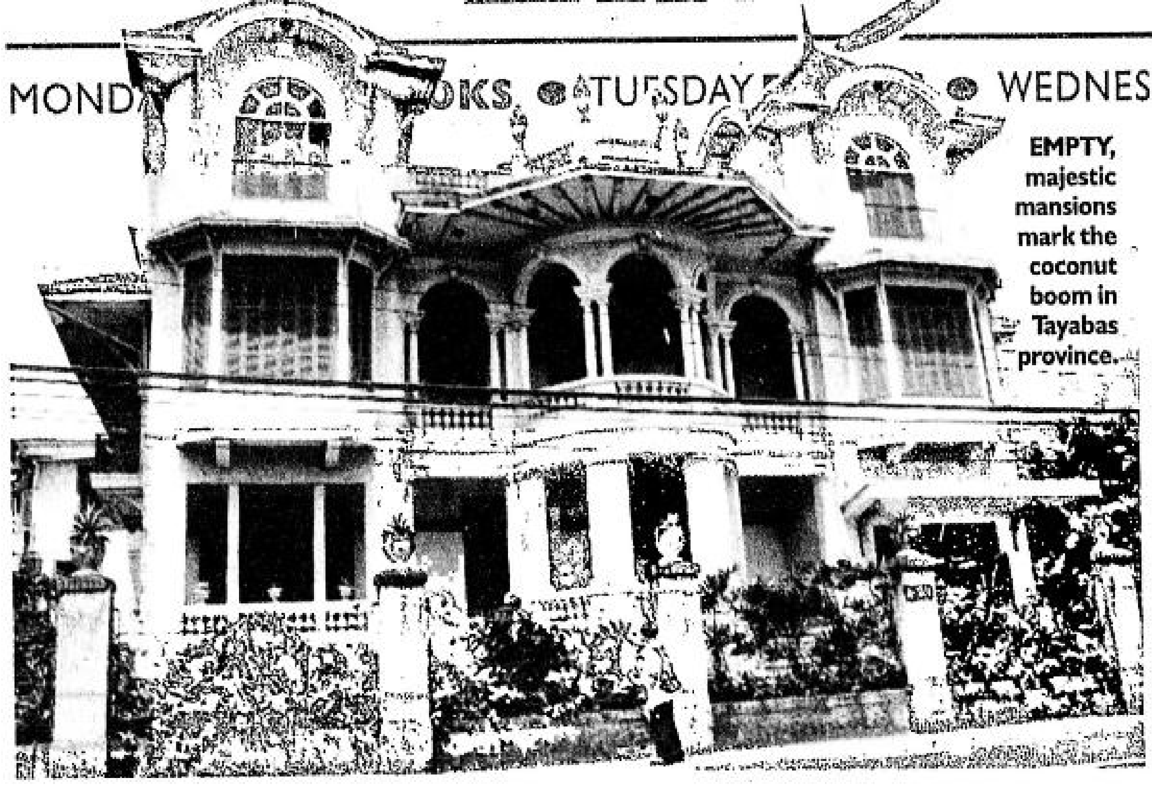
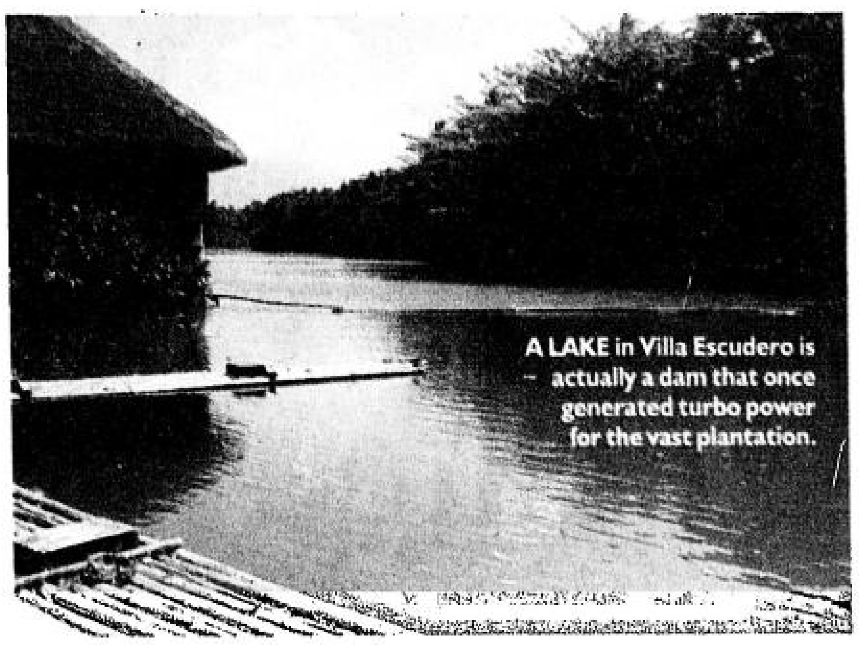


EMPTY, majestic mansions mark the coconut boom in Tayabas province.



A LAKE in Villa Escudero is actually a dam that once generated turbo power for the vast plantation.

A jaunt around Laguna, Quezon and Batangas unearths heritage gems

Viaje del Sol, sunny tour of Filipino heritage

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

THIS SUMMER, TAKE A Sunday, or better still, set aside a few days, and discover the Viaje del Sol which circles the Southern Tagalog provinces of Laguna, Quezon and Batangas.

Strung along the highway are interesting shops and gardens, artists' studios, unforgettable cuisine, and places to spend the night in amid rustic, first-rate surroundings.

The Laguna portion of the route starts at the Calamba exit of the South Luzon Expressway. The Pettyjohn pottery workshop in Pansol is the first stop. Jon and Tessy are considered pottery greats who pioneered studio pottery in the Philippines, using local clay and ash to create functional pottery. They also conduct pottery classes.

The Laguna route connects to the hot springs of Pansol, the historic towns of Bay and Pila, with their well-maintained ancestral homes, and Pagsanjan, with its famous rapids, before doubling southward to San Pablo and then to Quezon province.

Head for Kusina Salud in San Pablo for Filipino food that is certainly not the kind that can be found in any ordinary home like ours. Chef Paul Poblador, whose culinary creativity is full of surprises, fuses comfort food with the unexpected.

He served a fusion *mami* for *merienda* the other day, with condiments and spices to stir into the rich broth.

Kusina Salud is not only about culinary flavor. It is a sensual delight, set within a tropical jungle of a garden, with trees, luxurious bamboo, and plants coexisting with the patchwork house of recycled antique wood, its architectural details appliquéd embroidery-style in baroque abandon.

After all, this is the house of Patis Tesoro. Who else can combine pattern upon pattern and wash it with a color palette that astonishes the eyes? A gallery and gift shop has treasures, curios and collectibles to further tempt the eyes.

Villa Escudero, about half an hour from Kusina Salud, is a resort whose appeal is timeless. No vehicles are allowed past the parking lot. A carabao pulls a long, slow-moving buggy that brings visitors to the front desk to check into rooms located in bamboo cottages thatched with anahaw. From the lakeside cottages, the

VIAJE/ C3

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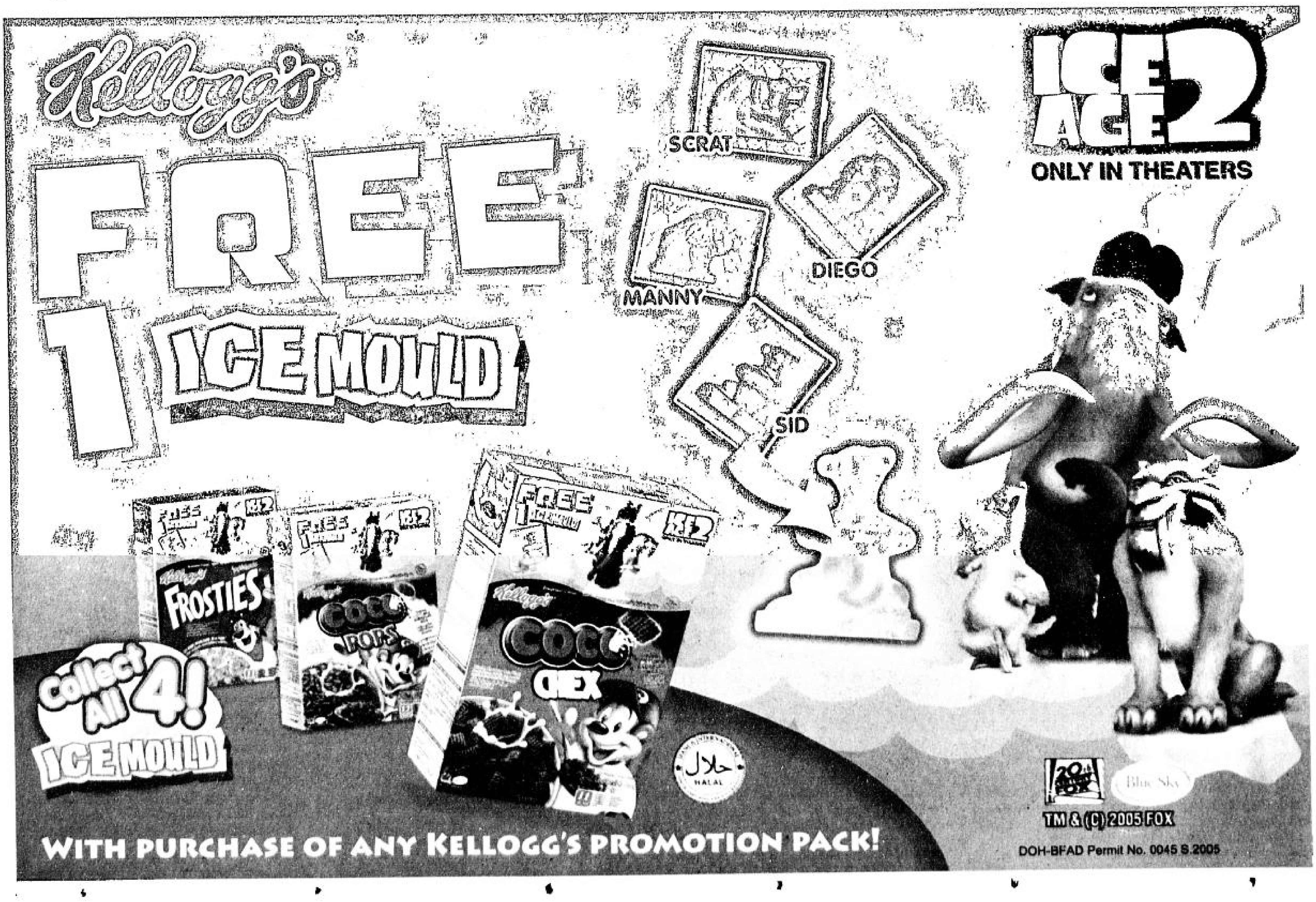

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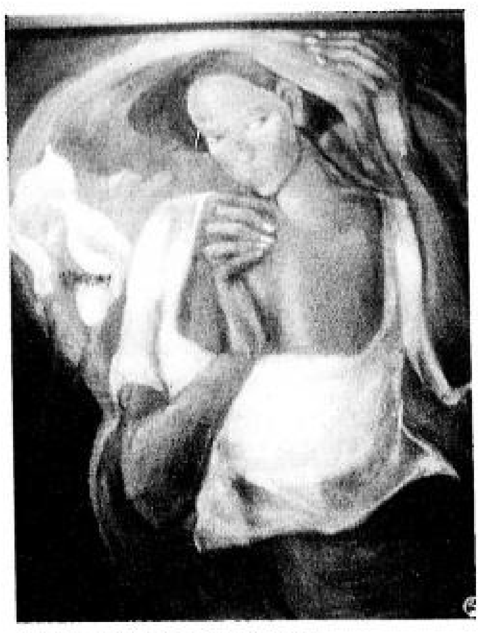
KULAY Marikina artists and guests at the opening of the exhibit



"BABAE," by Lydia Velasco

Kulay Marikina thrives while major artists donate to PGH

Art dedicated to people

By Constantino C. Tejero

THOSE WHO STILL THINK OF art-making as an elitist preoccupation have it all wrong. They only have to look around and see the numerous auction sales of artworks and art objects to raise funds for one special project or another.

Artists don't have to adopt Socialist Realism to propagandize their social conscience. One may create decadent art and still make this a tool to help the poor, protect the environment, or uphold the well-being of society.

Take Kulay Marikina. This new artists' organization aims to help the community not only in promoting cultural awareness and uplifting the stature of the arts, but also in aiding people's basic needs.

For its first anniversary, the group is holding "Affairs of the heART," some 75 artworks, paintings and a few sculptural pieces by 25 artists, until March 20 in Gallerie Hues, MC Home Depot, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

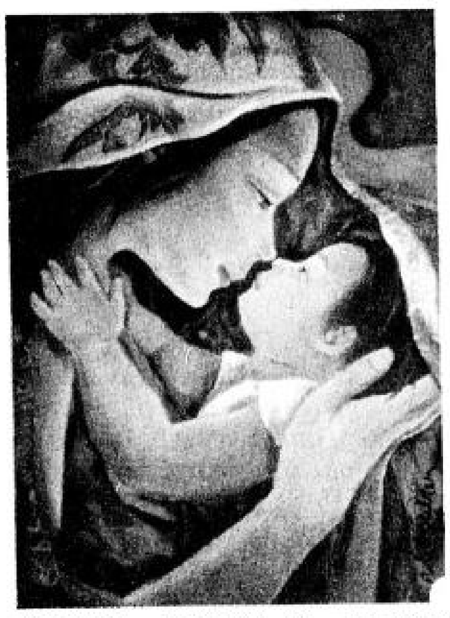
Sponsored by Kamayan, the exhibit is meant for Project Brave Kids. Proceeds of the artworks will go to the indigent patients of the Children's Cancer Ward of the Philippine Children's Medical Center in Quezon City.

As could be expected, the styles, techniques and mediums here are as variegated as there are number of members in the group.

Notable pieces

Of the more notable ones, Ige Concepcion's monochromatic abstraction in mixed media stands out for its size and as it is one of the very few nonfigurative pieces in the show. "Fleeting Moments of Summer" has the canvas studded with what look like buttons, glued with a swatch of jute, then daubed brown, umber, tinges of red.

On the other hand, Andy Pernia's abstract "Tinalikdan," in acrylic on canvas, encompasses the color wheel in blocks of red, yellow, orange, blue, green, violet, pink, purple and white.



"MOTHER and Child," by Remy Boquiren

Here, too, are Remy Boquiren's luminous maidens shrouded in batik and Lydia Velasco's incandescent maidens among lilies.

Both are multihued and in brilliant tones, but Boquiren's, smoothly limned in pastel on paper and leaning toward folk art, has an ethereality about it, while Velasco's, roughly rendered in acrylic on canvas and as Expressionist as any, looks rather heavy-set.

Rougher still and more Expressionistic are José Ibay's pieces in acrylic, oil stick and charcoal on paper. Here, notwithstanding the titles "Calla Lilies" and "Because You're Beautiful," the floral still life is rendered almost with violence.

A celebration of the human body can be seen in Armida Francisco's "Figure," in acrylic on canvas, with its profile of the male nude in impasto of brown, yellow, red, orange, blue, green and iridescent gold.

It is remarkably celebrated, almost worshipped, in the curves and highlights of the lovers' writhing bodies in brown monochrome in Elmer Torio's pieces in oil on canvas.

In Chie Cruz's high reliefs in silver-gray resin, however, the human form appears violated—and what violation! In "Nurture," a baby is suckling on the bosom of its mother's headless and halved body. In "Music Muse," a violin bursts out of the torn abdomen of a female torso.

Intimacy

Honey Banal's pieces in acrylic on canvas are notable for their suggestion and absence, aptly rendered in monochrome or muted tone. "Mother and Child" shows nothing but a pair of brown adult's slippers, a pair of blue child's shoes, and a child's pencil scrawling and doodling on the gray wall—yet one feels a sense of intimacy.

"White Wall" is just that, with pencil scratching on it and an old wrought-iron chair against it—yet one feels someone has just been sitting on the furniture.

The natural world is mysteriously conjured in Norlie Meimban's dusk-green "Gulod," in acrylic on canvas, showing silhouettes of trees, river and a point of light.

It is lambently limned in Roland Santos' "Go with the Flow," in watercolor on paper, with its school of fish in yellow, red, blue and white, swimming parallel in blue-violet water.

It is softly evoked in Andy Urag's "Morning Mood," in acrylic on canvas, a seascape of blue-green wash.

The artworks in this show are priced relatively lower than if they're exhibited in other galleries, presumably to sell them faster for the fund-raising.

Here is art called to the service of society. Yet among the pieces on display, not one could we call a specimen of Social Realism, none propagandistic or utilitarian.

Art to the rescue

An institution that has discovered a practical use for art is the Philippine General Hospital. At the forefront of this move is the PGH Medical Foundation, the hospital's official support institution.

PGH's only known association with art is National Artist Botong Francisco's mural of Philippine medical history at its main building's foyer. To people who come and go, it's just a fading memorial, something to be stared at on the wall as they wait for the doctor, their patient, or their turn at the entrance.

PGH serves an annual average of 600,000 patients. Of these, 80-90 percent are classified as indigents.

Says foundation president Dr. Gregorio T. Alvior Jr.: "However, as with most government-funded institutions, PGH's annual budget always falls short of its actual expenditure by about 30 percent. Every year it has a shortfall of some P300 million for patient care."

This is where the foundation enters. It helps in raising resources "to augment funds for free medicines; repairs and purchases of equipment and instruments for direct patient care; training needs of medical staff; administrative needs of the hospital." Not to mention the improvement and renovation of hospital infrastructure.

A-list donors

For its Alay sa PGH campaign drive, the foundation recently held at the Manila Polo Club main lounge "Sining at Awit para sa PGH," a mini concert and auction sale of paintings, sculptures, antiques, jewelry and other objets d'art.

Artists who donated their artworks included National Artists Napoleon Abueva and Arturo Luz, Juvenal Sansó, Augusto Albor, Phyllis Zaballero, Nestor Vinluan, Manuel Baldemor, Lito Carating, Valeria Cavestany and Stella Rojas.

Dr. Danny David donated a Romulo Olazo piece, while Dr. Gerard Parungao donated his Solomon Saprid.

We suggest that part of the proceeds of the auction be used to conserve and protect that giant masterwork at the hospital's entrance, which, being exposed to the elements, seems to be vanishing in time. Then art would have expanded its role to include one as savior of its own.

PLDT art award winners

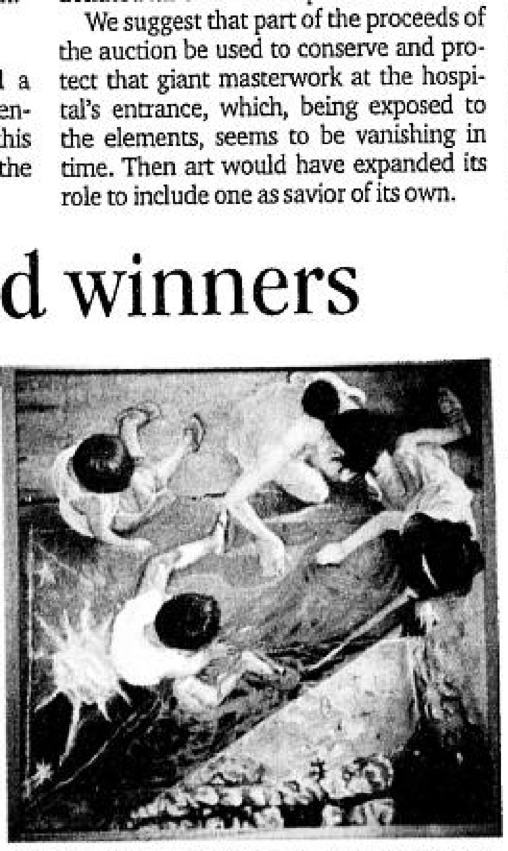
RANDY T. SOLON, A FINE ARTS STUDENT from University of the Philippines-Diliman, won the grand prize in the 20th annual Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT) and Directories Philippines Corp. (DPC) Telephone Directory Cover Visual Art National Competition.

Solon's oil on canvas, "Kabataan, Iguhit Mo ang Bukas, Kulayan Mo ang Pag-asa," won him P70,000 and a trophy. UP Diliman's School of Fine Arts received a P30,000 donation and a plaque. Solon's piece will grace the Metro Manila edition of the 2006-2007 PLDT-DPC telephone directory.

Jaime M. Lasugo Jr. from Philippine Women's University took home the second prize of P60,000 and a trophy for his acrylic "Sulong, Pilipinas," a lively rendition of a jeepney ferrying people. PWU's School of Fine Arts got a P25,000 donation and plaque.

A mixed-media creation by University of the East-Caloocan student Reynan Sanchez, "Kaunlaran St.," got third place with P50,000 and trophy. The UE School of Fine Arts got a P20,000 donation and plaque.

Other winners: (fourth place) Michael John Pama of La Consolacion College-Bacolod for "Sama-Sama at Iisa, Tayo Pilipino Tungo sa Pagbabago"; (fifth) Mark Miclat from Tarlac State University for "Pag-ibig, Pag-asa at Pananalig ang Pangunahing Kailangan ng Bawat Isa Tungo sa Totoong Tagumpay ng Pilipinas."

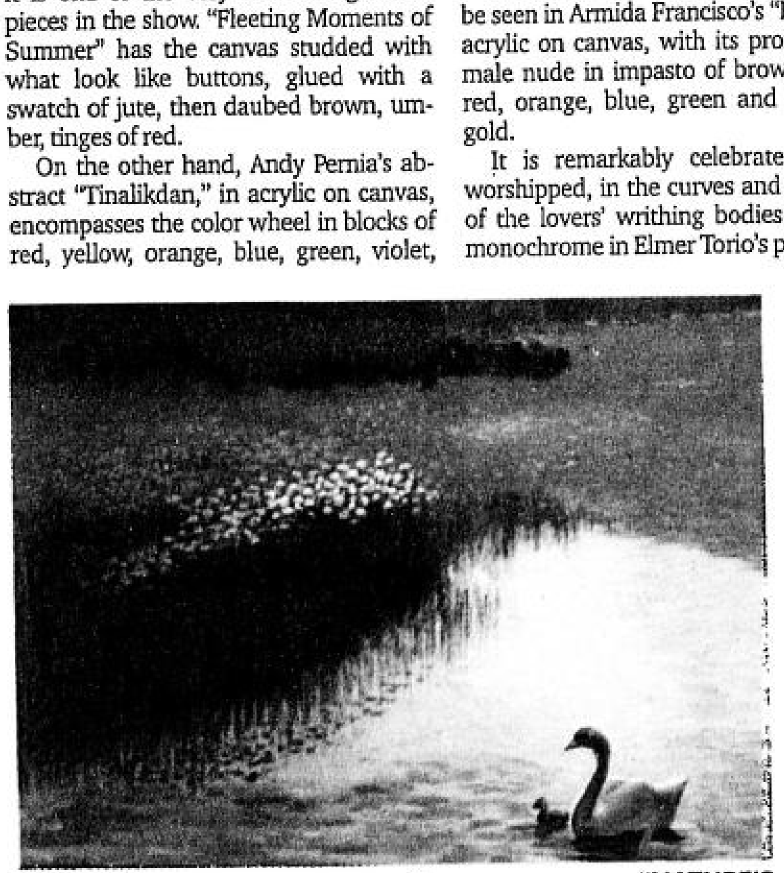


"KABATAAN, Iguhit Mo ang Bukas, Kulayan Mo ang Pag-asa," by Randy T. Solon

Getting honorable mentions were Aubrey D. Terry, University of Northern Philippines, "Sama-sama Tuluy-tuloy Pasulong Pataas Pilipinas"; Ronald Jerecano, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, "This Way... Up"; Irmalyn Raquedan, St. Scholastica's College Manila, "Nakasalalay sa Iyong Tira ang Kinabukasan Mo."

This year's theme was "Saan Ka Dapat Patungo, Pilipinas?"

Judges were Antipas Delotavo, Claude Tayag, Soler Santos, Thelma Kintanar and Edwin Sion.



"NATURE'S Masterpiece"

Portrait
of the woman as artist

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

THIS MONTH DEVOTED TO celebrating womanhood should see examples of triumphant artistic ascents amid obstacles.

And the case of Rellie Luciano Liwag, dutiful daughter to a 97-year-old mother, loyal wife to a bank executive, and conscientious mother to two grownup kids, who has embraced art in her mature period, is exemplary.

A popular fashion model in the late '70s who wore the designs of Pitoy Moreno and Auggie Cordero, Liwag has resurfaced as a serious painter. Shedding her inhibitions, as well as nurturing her passions, she is embracing brush and paint.

The big break came when she was invited by Galerie Joaquin's Jack Teotico to join his stable of emerging artists. She had by that time returned from Los Angeles, California, where she had lived for 18 long years. She later took lessons from veteran art mentors Andi Cubi and Gig de Pio. Later, she joined the Guevarra Group of artists of San Juan, Metro Manila.

Today, the fashion model-turned-painter has become a regular fixture in sketching sessions and group shows.

Fully aware that nothing beats formal studies, Liwag left for Japan to study ink painting under the famed Harumichi Sakata, and to find out how famous artists Hokusai and Hiroshige exerted such influence on the art world. It was, to her mind, a reeducation that laid the groundwork for her artistic devotion to the sanctity of nature, particularly landscape.

A Communication Arts graduate of Maryknoll College (now Miriam), Liwag had worked as a visual

PORTRAIT/ C4

Digital filmmaking contest for students

SMART COMMUNICATIONS INC. (SMART) is holding Smart Cuts, the 60-second digital filmmaking competition. The contest had simultaneous launchings at Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University Manila, University of Sto. Tomas, and University of the Philippines Diliman on Feb. 20.

Open to all enrollees of these four schools, Smart Cuts accepts film entries that are 60 seconds in length and follow the competition theme, "Bilib sa Pinoy."

All entries should be submitted in two formats: VHS and VCD or DVD, with a duly accomplished entry form and proof of enrollment, to the Smart Cuts partner school organizations: the Loyola Film Circle of Ateneo, Green Media Group of La Salle, Communication Arts Students' Association of UST, and Cinema as Art Movement of UP Diliman.

Any digital filming device (mobile phone video camera, digital camera, traditional camcorder, mini-DV recorder) is permitted. Entries will be judged regardless of production quality and budget.

The first-prize winner will get P12,000. The second- and third-prize winners will get P10,000 and P8,000, respectively. The Top 10 entries will also have their films screened at the Dream Theater of the Cultural Center of the Philippines during the awarding ceremony in April.

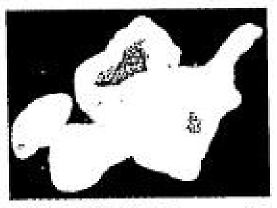
Deadline is March 31. For competition guidelines, text 0918-3372250. Also visit the office of the Smart Cuts partner school organization.

VISUAL ARTS

'Vibrations' at Galerie Astra

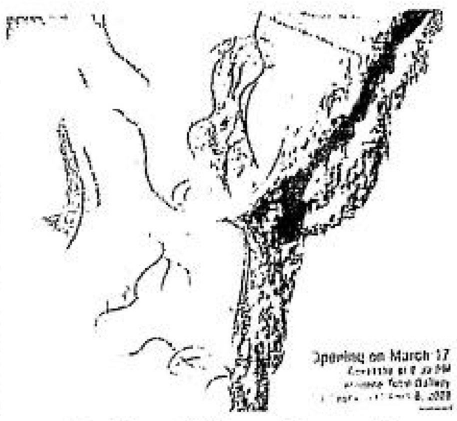
A GROUP exhibit, "Vibrations," featuring Cid Reyes, Cobie Cruz, Michel Herbert, Joey Ibay and Rico Lascano opens on March 17 in Galerie Astra, 210 LRI Business Plaza, 2/L, Nicanor Garcia St., Bel-Air II, Makati. The dominant style in the exhibit is abstraction counterpointed by figurative expressionism, creating sparks of artistic energy. Reyes, says critic Gino Dormiendo, is "a most worthy avatar of the modern abstract." Cobie's explorations are either pure abstraction or expressionist rainscape. Herbert is known for his dynamic abstraction that evoke meditation or exaltation. Reviewer Adele Estrada says Lascano's "brush captures the essence of the elements." Call 8902988.

New artists at One Workshop



"ORGANICO Hamog," by Mac Valdezco

ONE WORKSHOP Gallery (2241 La Fuerza Plaza II, Chino Roces Ave. and Sabio St., Makati) presents exhibits by emerging artists Cathy Lasam (installations), Luis Lorenzana (paintings) and Mac Valdezco (sculptures) until March 28. Call 8105091 or 8192074.



Katigbak at Alliance Française

ALLIANCE Française de Manille presents "Four Weddings and a Funeral," paintings, sculptures and poetry by Grace Kalaw-Katigbak. The exhibit opens on March 17 in Alliance Total Gallery, 209 Nicanor Garcia St., Bel-Air. Exhibit will run until April 6. Call 8957441/7585 or e-mail cultural@alliance.ph.

Photography exhibit

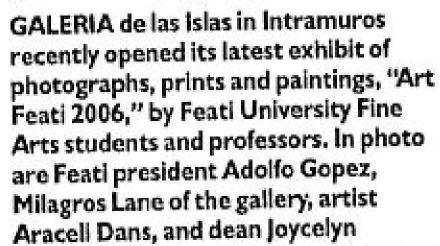
"SUNPRINTS," a photography exhibit featuring prints developed under natural sunlight, runs March 15-28 at The Arts Center, 4/F, SM Megamall. The exhibit is by photo-artists Julius Clar and Allan Razo, both faculty members of De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde's School of Design and Arts. The photo-artists treated their own paper stock with Razo using platinum and Clar in the 19th-century Van Dyke method of print processing with iron and silver nitrate. Call 5267441 to 47 local 123.

Bitanga at Ayala Museum

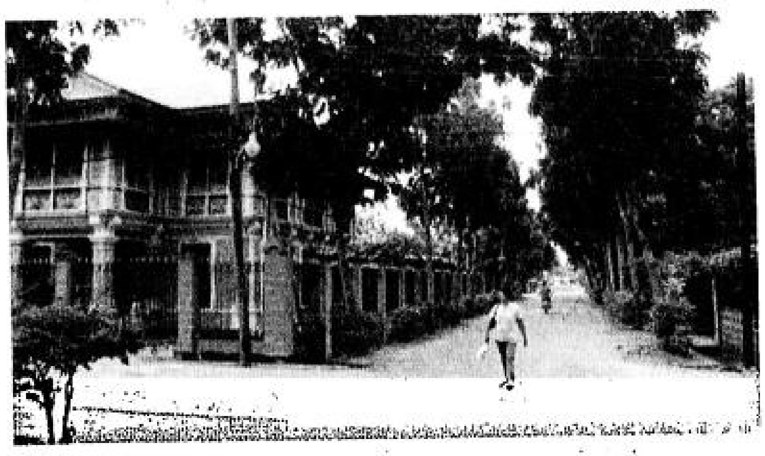
ROSARIO Bitanga presents her recent paintings and sculptures until March 21 in MuseumSpace, 2/F Glass Wing of the Ayala Museum. The six pieces of sculpture featured in the exhibit are progressions of her series on stainless-steel forms mounted on very articulate resin bases. The sculptures are inspired by Sanskrit-related philosophies, invoking the sutra and mantra, human evocations of feelings and abstract realities.

Co at Finale Art File

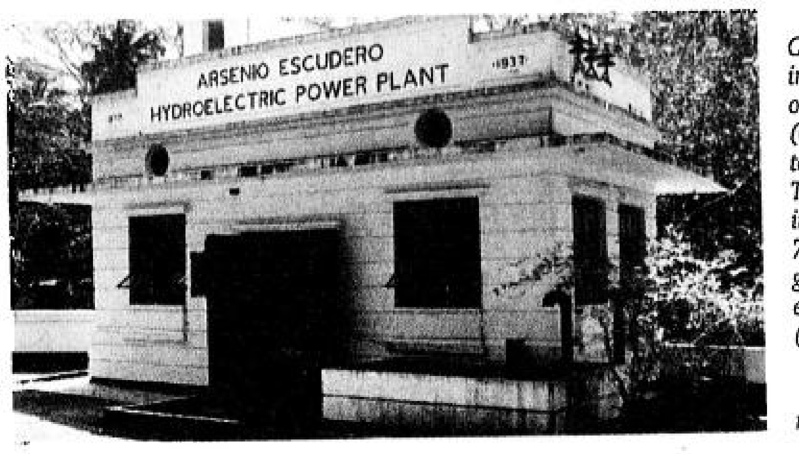
BACOLOD-BASED Charlie Co presents new works in "Stages," which opens on March 15 in Finale Art File (4/F, LaO Center, Pasay Road, and Makati Avenue, Makati). Composed of three-dimensional works in oil and terra cotta, the exhibit teems with folkloric references and exuberant colors, celebrating religion, music and romance. It runs until March 29. Call 8132310 and 8125034.



GALERIA de las Islas in Intramuros recently opened its latest exhibit of photographs, prints and paintings, "Art Feati 2006," by Feati University Fine Arts students and professors. In photo are Feati president Adolfo Gopez, Milagros Lane of the gallery, artist Araceli Dans, and dean Joycelyn Mananghaya. The group show features over 80 artworks rendered in diverse media. The show runs until March 18. Call 5272113.



SAN Juan in Batangas is a quiet enclave of heritage houses framed by tree-lined streets.



THE FIRST hydroelectric power plant in the country dates from 1937, originally built to power the Escudero coconut plantation.

Viaje del Sol

From page C1

sunrise view of Mount Banahaw beyond the lake is stunning.

Banahaw backdrops the elegant plantation-style Escudero family residence built during the American Commonwealth era. Beside it is their astonishing private museum with a collection of amazing range.

Within a half-hour driving distance is Sariyaya, where stunning pre-World War II mansions around the plaza are reminders of the days during the American Commonwealth era when coconut boomed and plantation owners constructed homes that reflected their stature.

Potter's Garden

In Tiaong is Ugu Bigyan's Potter's Garden. Like his popular pottery that combines clay with dried wood, his garden blends nature with pavilions that provide chairs, daybeds and pillows, all of his own design, to entice urban bodies to relax. A lush garden rambles around pavilions, shops, pottery studios that offer classes, and Ugu's residence.

After half an hour's drive from Candelaria in Quezon province, the highway enters the tip of Batangas province, leading to the town of San Juan.

If there would be a high point in Viaje del Sol, it is, without a doubt, genteel, elegant San Juan.

Beaches are considered the town's main attraction, but unknown to many, the town itself is a gem. Behind rows of mahogany trees on both sides of the streets stand graceful houses that mostly date from the 1920s until the years just before World War II.

Some are aging dowagers, their good bones still showing despite years of neglect. A number of houses only need a nip and tuck to bring them back to shape. Others, abandoned by their owners who have moved to cities—Manila or abroad—stand abandoned, in decay and disrepair.

San Juan houses have a similarity in design. Probably most of them were built either by an unknown architect or by a team of master carpenters who moved from one construction to the next.

SALUD Restaurant in Putol is a must-see not only for its rustic elegance but also for its Filipino cuisine.

Many two-storied houses are designed around a peaked roof that looks like a spire covering a small, single-room third story that is the prominent feature of the façade. Turrets pierce the San Juan skyline.

The Leon Mercado house, lovingly restored by his descendants, stands out. A Commonwealth-era variation on the traditional *bahay-na-bato*, the ground floor of the two-story pink house is of concrete while the second floor is totally of wood.

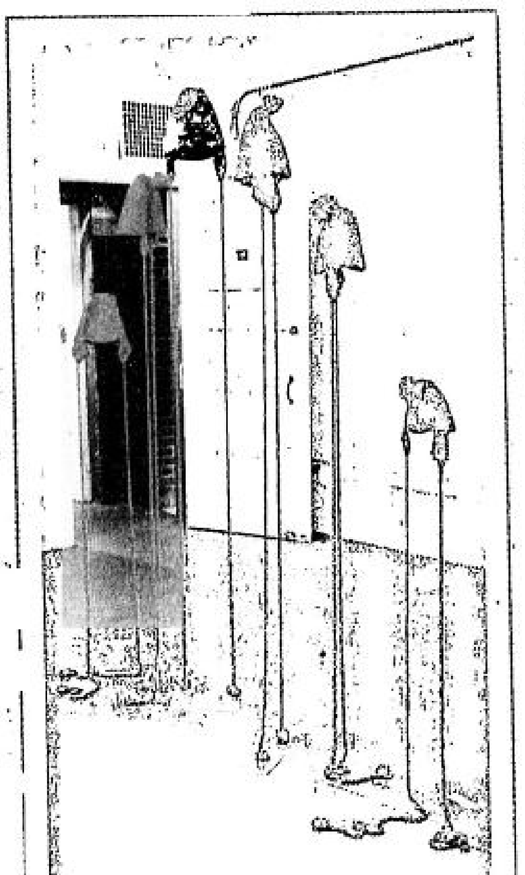
Wide windows slide completely open. *Ventanillas* below windows open to let in more air. Interior partitions, all of polished hardwood, are perforated on top as they are in traditional Philippine houses, to increase air circulation.

In San Juan, Bahay Marikit is a surprising, absolutely comfortable resort hotel picturesquely evoking traditional Philippine architecture built around a large pool whose free-form shape meanders to avoid cutting mature coconut trees on the site.

Only two hours away from Manila, Viaje del Sol opens up an entire experience of Philippine life that recharges urbanites by reacquainting them with provincial roots.

Contact: Pettyjohn Pottery Workshop in Bucal, Calamba, Laguna (049-5451608); Kusina Salud in Bgy. Sta Cruz, Putol, San Pablo (049-2466878 or 02-7226985); Villa Escudero in San Pablo (02-5210830, 02-5232944); Ugu Bigyan Potter's Garden, 490 Alvarez Village, Bgy Lusacan, Tiaong, Quezon (042-5459144); Bahay Marikit in San Juan, Batangas (043-5754745, 02-7570294); for information on San Juan, Batangas, contact the Tourism Information Office headed by Councilor Noel Pascua at the Municipal Hall (043-5753571, 043-5753854).

Feedback is welcome at afvillalon@hotmail.com



"RED Hats"

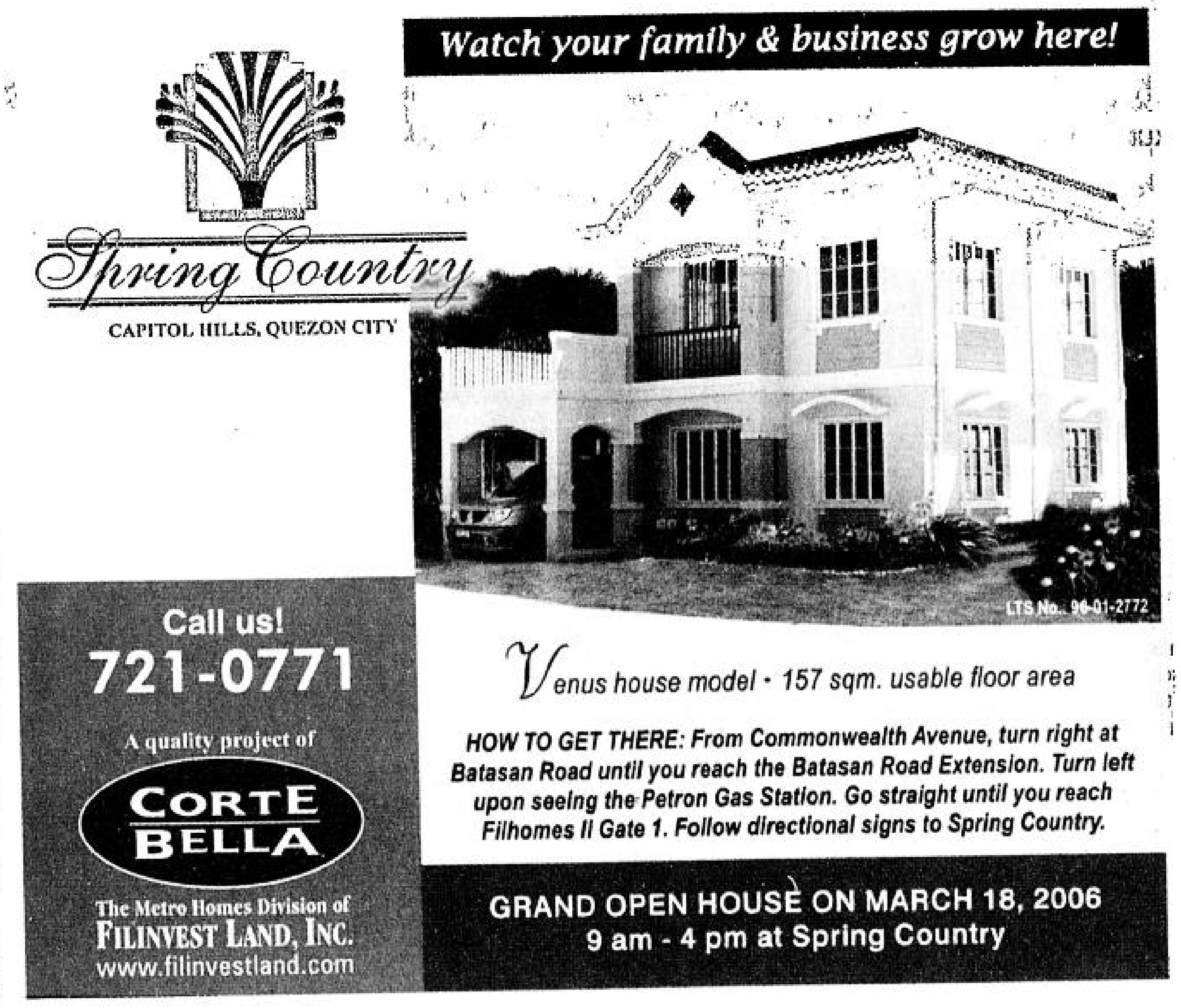
Camacho at CCP

BEA CAMACHO, a summa cum laude graduate of Harvard University, will be holding her first solo exhibit, "Blind Transmission," which will open on March 16, 6 p.m., at the Bulwagang Fernando Amorsolo (Small Gallery), Cultural Center of the Philippines, and run until April 16.

The exhibit features the artist's recent work in video, photography, sculpture, installation and performance. It will be curated by Roberto Chabet.

The exhibit aims to address ideas of distance, connection and disconnection, communication and miscommunication, transience and portability, implicit and explicit experience.

Camacho received the Albert Alcalay Awards from the Harvard Visual and Environmental Studies Department, and the David McCord Prize for Achievement in the Arts. She is the eldest daughter of former finance secretary José Isidro Camacho, vice chair for Credit Suisse First Boston (Asia), and Kim Camacho.



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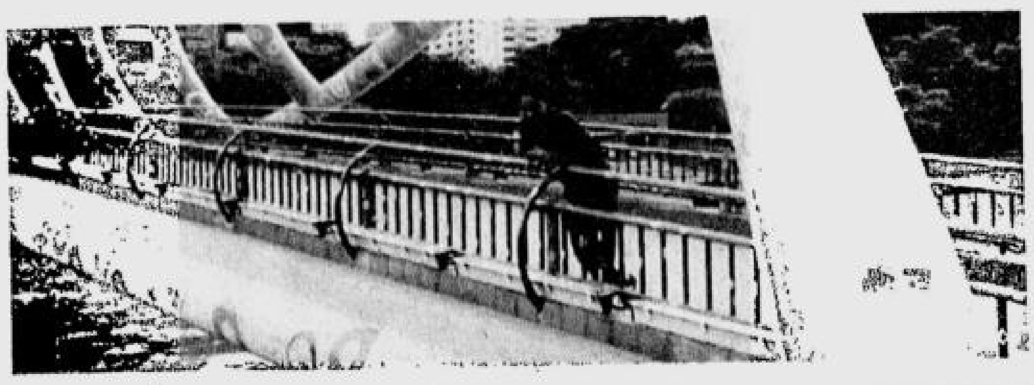

ROMEO Forbes on Alkaff Bridge in Singapore last November

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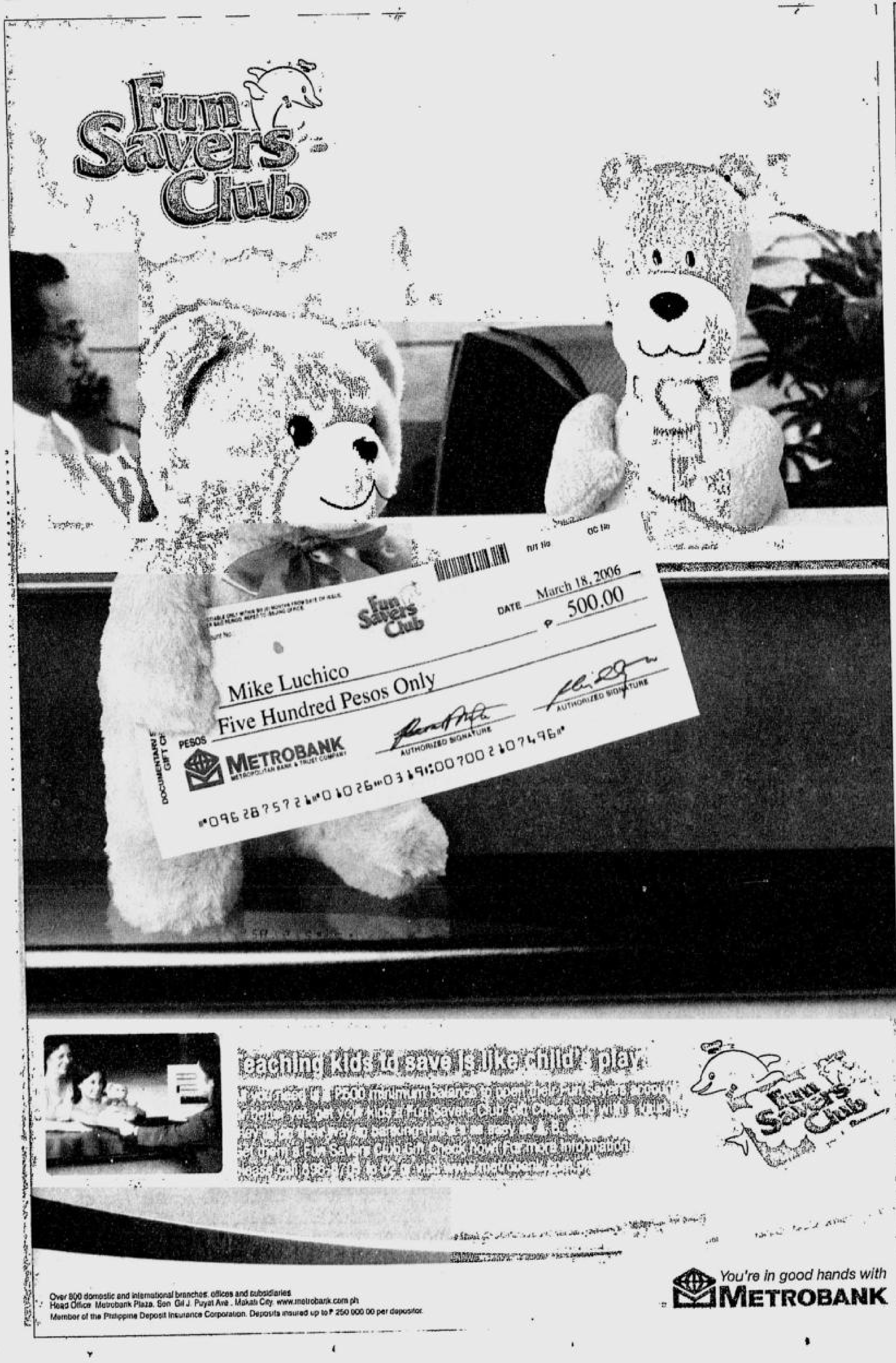

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FORBES with friends in Singapore

Storywriting contest named after late Guyito artist

IN MEMORY OF THE RECENTLY DECEASED young artist Romeo Forbes, Canvas, a nonstock, nonprofit foundation for the arts, is holding the Romeo Forbes Children's Storywriting Competition.

Held in cooperation with Artery Manila, Forbes' management agency, the contest is open to all Filipino writers. For contest rules and other information, visit www.canvas.ph or e-mail info@canvas.ph

Forbes died last month of cancer of the blood. He was 25.

Before he died, Forbes was one of 20 artists who painted the life-size Guyito sculptures by Sajid Imao in connection with the 20th anniversary of the Inquirer. Guyito is the creation of well-loved INQUIRER cartoonist Jess Abrera.

WITH MALANG during the presentation of the painted Guyitos at Ayala Museum last December

Forbes also did the illustrations for the best-selling children's book "Elias and His Trees," published by Canvas and University of Santo Tomas Publishing House last year.

The illustrations for the eco-fable, an adaptation of Jean Giono's "The Man Who Planted Trees," were actually large-scale works in oil and acrylic. The works were sold out last year during Forbes's first major solo show.

As a tribute to Forbes, Canvas says it will hold an annual children's writing contest and produce original storybooks for children here and abroad.

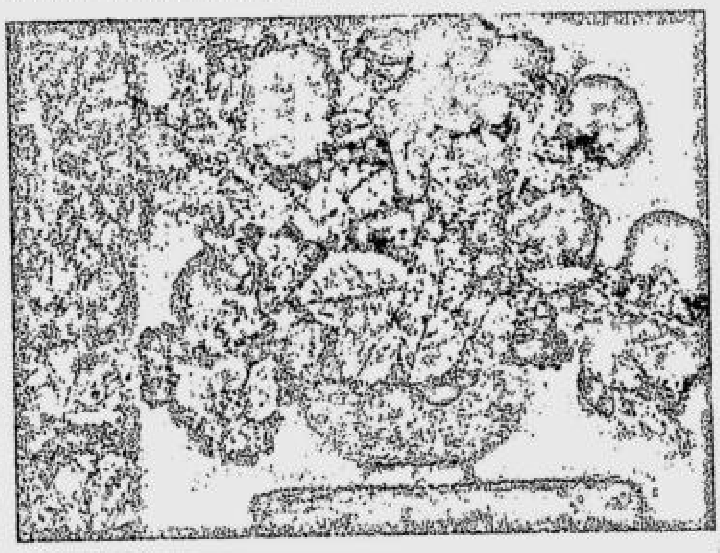
This year, Canvas fellow Rodel Tapaya will illustrate the winning story. Deadline for submission of entries is May 16.

Sansô in Alabang

JUVENAL Sansô WILL GIVE A talk on composition on March 19, 4 p.m., at Galerie Francesca, Unit 2B, 3/L, Treasure Trove, Festival Supermall, Alabang, Muntinlupa, as part of his outreach project this year to foster correct art appreciation.

Sansô is internationally renowned for his rich and vigorous depictions of flowers and landscapes. His works are included in the collections of Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of New York, Smithsonian Institute, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, San Francisco Museum, Cleveland Museum of Art, Musee d'art Moderne in Paris, and the Rosenwald National Gallery of Washington.

Call 8098495, 723-9253, or visit www.galeriejoaquin.com



"STILL Life"

Book on Sulu designs

"UKKIL: VISUAL ARTS OF THE Sulu Archipelago," by Ligaya F. Amilbangsa, will be launched on March 14, 5 p.m., at Sentrong Pangkultura ng Marikina, Kapitan Moy Bldg., Marikina, by Ateneo Press in cooperation with the office of Mayor Marides Fernando.

Noted sculptor Abdulmari Imao writes: "This book is a revelation of the folk artistic heritage, tradition and culture of the Sulu archipelago. It is recommended to all readers who wish to know and understand the famous *ukkil* arts and designs."

The book shows, through research and documentation of artifacts and practices, how art pervades the everyday life of the people of Sulu.

"Ukkil" will be available during the launch at a special price, and may be ordered through Ateneo Press (tel. 4265984) and bookstores such as Aeon (9269406), Bound (4117768), FullyBooked (9134543, 7565002 and 7244057), Popular (3722162) and Solidaridad (5230870).

Portrait of the woman . . .

From page C2

aids specialist in the graphics department of a Los Angeles company. Even then, she was fascinated by the works of Vincent van Gogh.

With a gift for perceiving beauty even in the most commonplace surroundings, Liwag paints bodies, faces and spaces. She is never beholden to any particular style, though she is, brushwork and all, partial to realism bordering on impressionism.

Her works in various media, acrylic and oil, are testament to a feminine sensibility in a male-dominated field.

To assert herself, she traveled to New York late last year to enroll at the Arts Students League of New York, in Manhattan, under Bob Cenedella. Through the generosity of a former classmate, Emily Silva, who is based in the Big Apple, she had the opportunity to visit museums and art centers in the city.

The artistic side of Liwag gets valuable support from her husband, Mel, a former model like her who's now into banking while getting involved in photography.

With the emotional preparations for an artistic career, she had patiently waited all these years to bloom and blossom. She now paints the world from the vantage view of a woman doubly fulfilled in life and art.

E-mail the author at gdormiendo@yahoo.com

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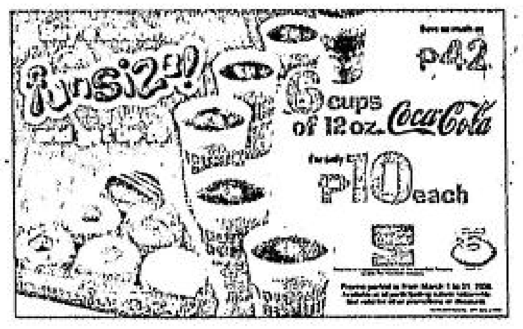
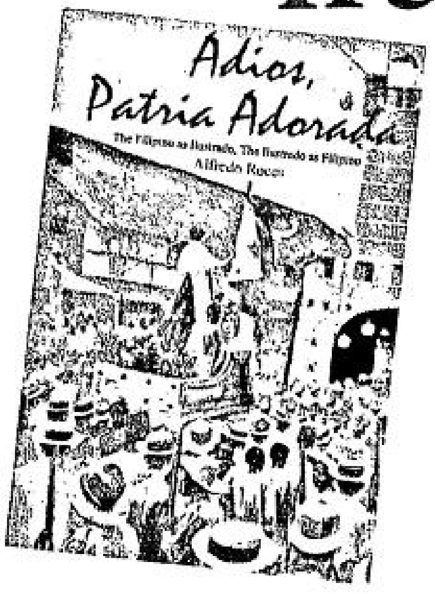


Pained look at the ilustrados

The ilustrados thought of the nation first. Today's elite think of themselves first

By F. Sionil José



ALFREDO ROCES' LATEST book, "Adios, Patria Adorada" (De La Salle University Press, 2006, 314 pages) is a learned and nostalgic look at the ilustrados, the "enlightened" men who formulated the ideas of Asia's first republic. There is ample reason for welcoming this latest excursion into an ozone layer of our recent past, particularly in these times befogged by political shenanigans and jockeying by the elite who have replaced this first generation of illustrious leaders.

For one, the author knows what he is talking about, having descended from ilustrado lineage. For another, Roces writes with graceful felicity—a quality that is often missing in those learned tomes by academic historians. His craft was honed by years as a socio-cultural commentator in the old Manila Times till 1972, when Marcos closed that venerable newspaper.

Alfredo also wrote on art, on our finest visual artists, starting with Amorsolo, Hidalgo, and all the rest who formed the vanguard of our cultural tradition. In these books, he mixed history with his knowledge of art itself, thereby putting these artists in the context of our cultural development.

As a cultural commentator, Alfredo dealt with high and ghostly matters with clarity and precision. He also descended on solid ground and commented on the venality of politicians, on the need for mayors to clean up their cities, in this case,

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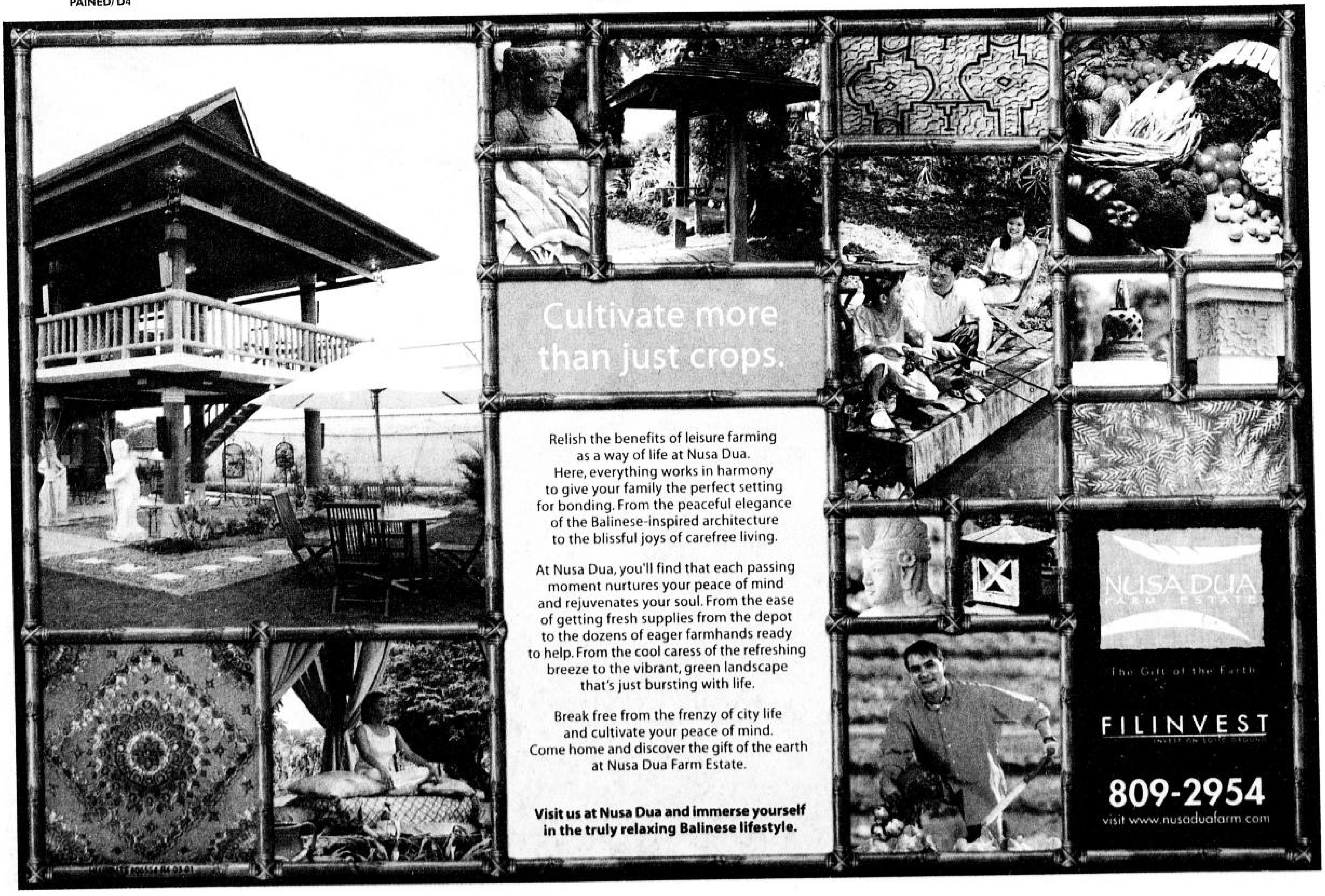
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Music in times of emergency

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

ANDREW Fernando

ALEXANDRU Tomescu

THE GOOD NEWS IS FIRST-RATE artists and concert organizers don't cancel because of political rallies, Senate hearings on scams and assorted malfeasances, and alleged coup attempts.

The bad news is sponsors hardly ever support classical concerts when the stock market is down, and when they do, they give only a fraction of what they used to give in the past while imposing even stiffer conditionalities such as maximum media exposure for their products and services (which is, however, understandable).

The other bad news is corporate sponsors hardly ever come to the rescue of classical music.

So how could one possibly bring the likes of Otoniel Gonzaga, Eleanor Calbes, Oliver Salonga, Victor Michael Coo and Lea Salonga to mainstream classical audiences?

It takes a lot of emotional strength to pull off a good a concert and still project a happy face in the face of a major deficit.

You are happy because your artists received standing ovations, you got record ticket sales and good reviews—all are a balm to our weary spirit.

But every concert producer knows you don't break even on ticket sales but on sponsorships.

This was what I told Gonzaga when we cancelled a series of outreach concerts for lack of sponsorship after his triumphant team-up with Lea Salonga at the CCP. And so, the tenor agreed to sing for free to open the 2006 Pasig Summer Music Festival, which doesn't get any help from the city now identified with "*shabu talipapa*" and the tragic Ultra stampede.

The tumultuous audience response to that Pasig concert of Gonzaga and baritone Andrew Fernando showed that good concerts could happen without support from the city government or that supposed protector of the arts, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

Despite the difficulties, one gets, as a friend called it, "psychic rewards" from holding the concerts. It was a gratifying sight to see Gemma Cruz-Araneta patronizing the Pasig concert and even making the effort to promote it through her television program, which is both informative and a concert treat for TV audiences who hardly ever hear a first-rate tenor and baritone on television awash with noontime inanities.

And so, in times of state of emergency, one tries very hard to keep first-rate music alive while wondering where the country is headed.

JULIAN Quirit, Lea Salonga and Otoniel Gonzaga

Tomescu, Licad

After winning more than 22 international violin competitions, Romanian violin superstar Alexandru Tomescu now sits on the jury of some of the competitions he won. He will be heard again in Manila, March 26, at the Philamlife Theater with pianist Mary Anne Espina. His Manila program includes Beethoven's Spring Sonata and some violin dazzlers by Sarasate and Paganini.

Our very own Cecile Licad is very much in demand in the European circuit after her acclaimed solo recital in Paris a few years ago. She will be in Manila, April 27, for a performance at the Philamlife Theater. Her program: Mozart Fantasy in C Minor; Chopin Etudes, Op. 25; and Rachmaninoff Sonata No. 2 in B Flat Minor.

For inquiries on the Tomescu and Licad concerts, call 9007023 or 0910-8851136.

GEMMA Cruz-Araneta interviewing Gonzaga

Paoay performance

Outreach concert advisory: Tenor Lemuel de la Cruz, soprano Alexis Edralin, flutist GJ Herman Gomez and pianist Mary Anne Espina will be heard on the opening of the National Heritage Festival in Paoay, Ilocos Norte, April 30, with Cecile Licad as guest artist.

I made a quick tour of Paoay through the courtesy of Mr. and Ms Victoriano Carpio and realized that appreciation for classical music in the place was waning. The last artists heard in the place some years back were Licad, Ingrid Sala Santamaria and Reynaldo Reyes.

Symphony premiered

On March 1, Jeffrey Ching's Fifth Symphony had its world premiere in the Berlin Philharmonie and got good response. Titled "Kunstkammer" (German for "cabinet of curiousities"), the piece was commissioned by the Deutsches Kammerorchester Berlin (DKO) at the behest of renowned Russian conductor Michail Jurowski. The latter played duets with the great Shostakovich while still a student at the Moscow Conservatory.

For feedback, e-mail the author at musicnewsservice@yahoo.com

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Ballet Manila holds summer workshop

BABY Ballet students

BALLET MANILA CONDUCTS ITS 10th Summer Workshop on April 3-May 28.

Workshop teachers are BM artistic director and principal ballerina Lisa Macuja-Elizalde and BM artistic associate and ballet master Osias Barroso.

Ballet classes are in four levels, from beginners (Level I) to advance (Level IV). There will also be classes in *pointe* class, variation, *pas de deux*/partnering, boys class and adult ballet.

Ballet Manila also offers baby ballet for kids who want to learn ballet as early as three years old. Enrollment is on March 15-April 8.

The workshop will culminate with a two-day recital on May 27-28 at the Star Theatre, Star City, CCP Complex, Pasay City. Call 4000292, 4043086, 5255967. Visit www.balletmanila.net or e-mail info@balletmanila.net

BALLET Manila school directress Lisa Macuja Elizalde and senior soloist Sandra Lynn Huang with students

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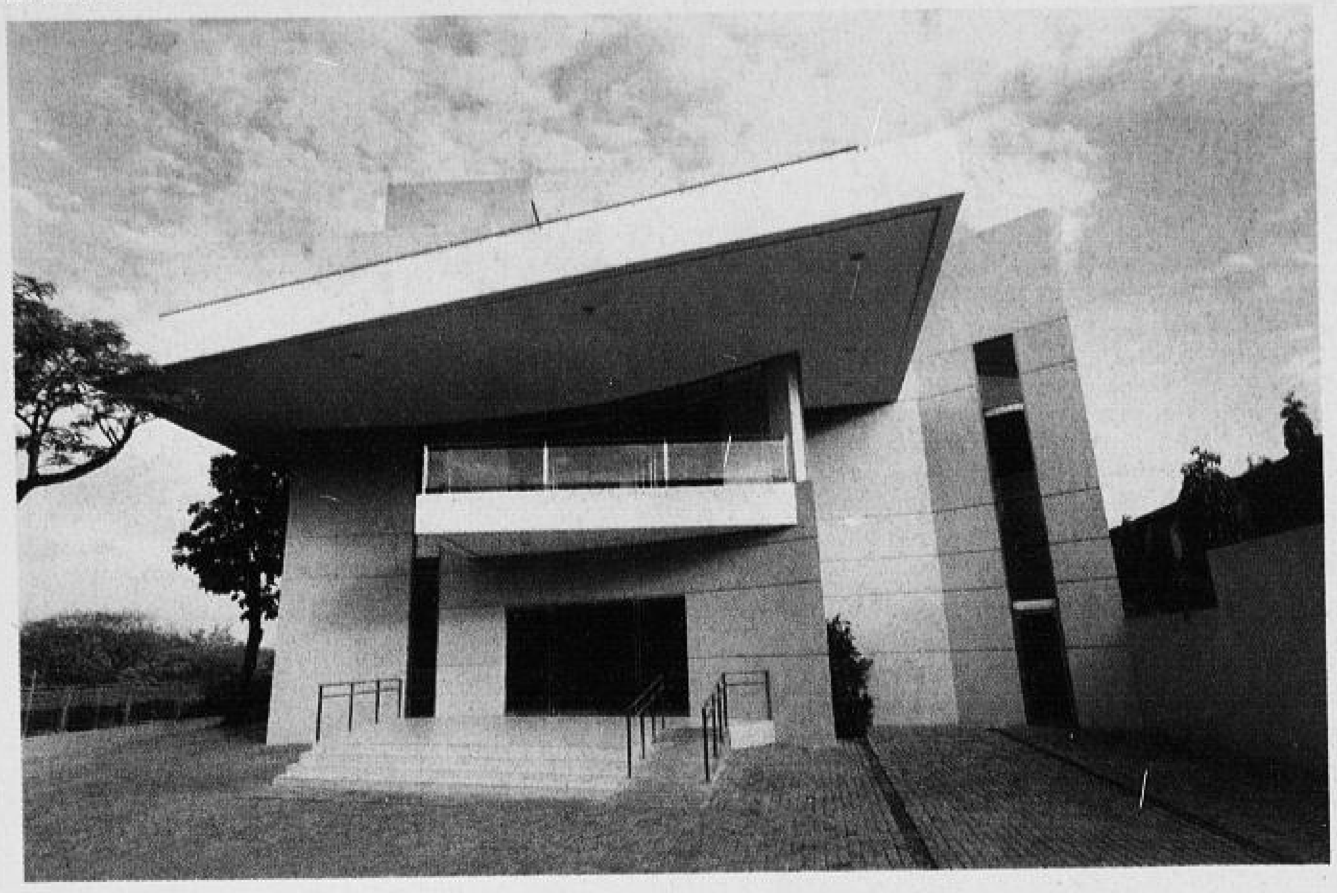


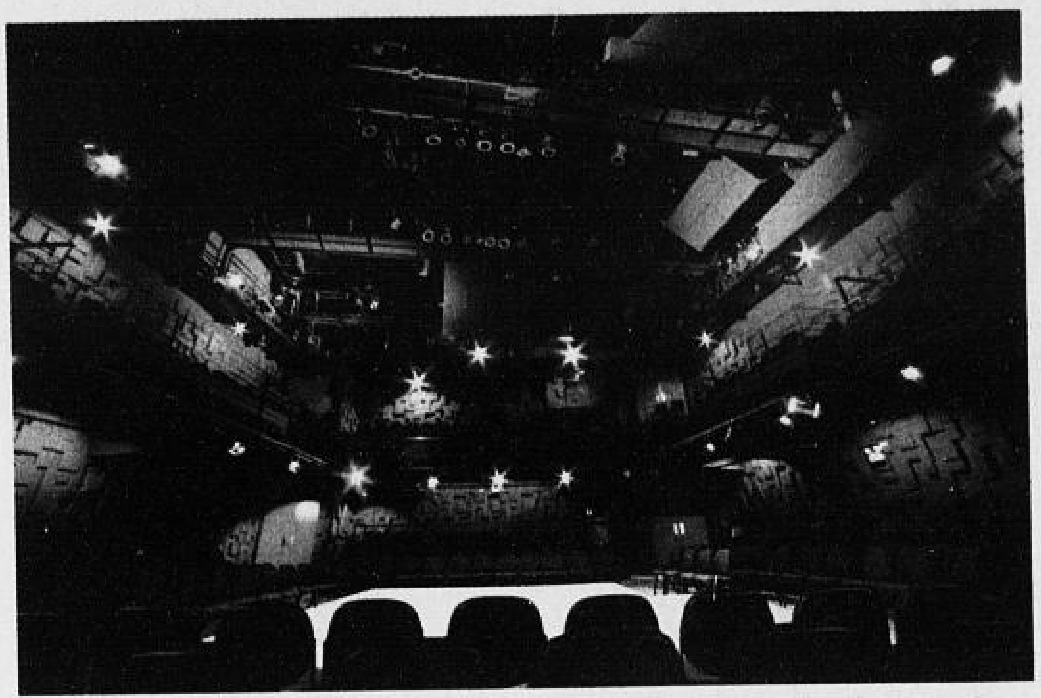
FAÇADE of the brand-new PW Theater Center, located at Brgy. Kristong Hari, QC

Home at last for Peta

THE PHILIPPINE EDUCATIONAL THEATER Association will inaugurate its brand-new home, the Peta Theater Center, on March 18, 6 p.m.

The center, located at 5 Sunnyside Drive, Barangay Kristong Hari, Quezon City (behind the Quezon City Sports Club), features the following spaces:

- A medium-sized 400-seat "black box" theater (Peta-Phinma Theater) that can be arranged in various ways depending on the performance. It serves as the home of the Peta Kalinangan Ensemble, the company's repertory arm, as well as a performance space for collaborations with local and international partners.
- A studio cum classroom that can be used for workshops, trainings and conferences. It also houses Peta's training programs and institute courses for the Philippines and Asia-Pacific region.
- The PLDT / Smart Exhibition Hall which serves as the Theater Center's main reception area as well as a performance, exhibit and seminar space.
- A Library and Resource Center offering valuable material sources for theater research and countless archives that Peta has collected through the decades.
- Administrative office and headquarters



THE CENTER'S medium-sized 400-seat "black box" theater that can be arranged in various ways depending on the performance

The Peta Theater Center was designed by the architectural firm of Leandro V. Locsin Partners, led by project partner-in-charge Raul Locsin and design consultant Leandro Y. Locsin Jr. Their final design features a structure with a pronounced concave façade, an articulated canopy and tiered decks with concrete and glass, housing a box theater within.

Local partners that supported the establishment of the Center include the Phinma Group, PLDT Foundation, Smart Communications, Washington SyCip, Sen. Francis Pangilinan, José Mari Chan, McCann-Erickson Philippines, National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Consuelo Foundation, Pacific Paint (Boysen) Philippines, Inc., DuPont Far East, Inc., Leandro V. Locsin Partners, AMCON Project Managers, Décor, and others.

International funders include Bread for the World, Misereor and Terre des Hommes from Germany; Cordaid of the Netherlands; Development and Peace of Canada; Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation from the US; Oxfam-Great Britain, and Japan Foundation.

SAM Concepcion with kiddie workshoppers

Playshop summer workshops

NOW ON ITS 13TH YEAR, Playshop, the country's top multimedia summer workshop of choice, has a new workshop venue at AFP Theater, apart from Shangri-La Plaza Mall and Alabang Town Center.

With workshops on musical theater, voice, modeling, street dancing, public speaking and hosting, starting April 3, Playshop encourages students to hone their talents and discover other artistic potentials.

New workshops also make Playshop even more exciting. Children can develop their self-projection and confidence through the modeling for children class.

This year also marks the second year of "Summer Stock," an advanced musical theater class handled in a semiprofessional environment. Here, students are not mere amateurs learning or improving their craft. They also get to produce their own version of a major play.

"Little Big Star" finalist Sam Concepcion will endorse this year's series of workshops. Already an experienced theater actor, singer and dancer, this 13-year-old began attending Playshop in 2002 and has since been going back every summer.

"I wouldn't be in show biz today if it weren't for Playshop because I got my training there. They taught me to sing, to dance and through the years, I've been learning, learning and learning," he says.

Aside from the excellent training students can get from Playshop, chances of "making it" in mainstream TV and entertainment are made possible because Stages (management team behind Christian Bautista and Sam Concepcion, among others) talent scouts are always on the lookout for new and promising talents from the workshops.

Enrollment in Trumpets Playshop is ongoing. Call 6362842 or 6354478.

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By Wen del Rosario-Raymundo

I ACQUIRED "NIMH" WHILE COMPLETELY unaware of the lofty stature accorded Newbery medalists. Being 18 then, I chose it only because: 1) it was on sale, and 2) the important-looking gold seal on its cover gave the impression that it was a good read.

Indeed, it was! However, I felt a lingering sense of regret at having encountered "NIMH" way past the childhood years it was originally intended for.

I then fiercely resolved that my children would develop a passion for reading by having access to critically acclaimed children's books at the earliest age possible. Since then, I have collected all Newbery winners from 1922, plus over a thousand other titles representing the best in children's literature.

Now, my children are voracious readers, preferring books over television.

"NIMH" inspired a transformation: from a woman who read only for herself, into one determined to create a new generation of readers in her children.

In celebration of the Philippine Daily Inquirer's 20th anniversary, get a chance to win P3,000 PowerBooks gift certificates and be featured in the Inquirer's pages by writing about the power of reading. For contest mechanics, log on to www.powerbooks.com.ph.

THE AUTHOR is a 40-year-old part-time obstetrician-gynecologist and mother to Enzo, 8, Juancho, 6, and Xandy, 4.

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Pained look at the Ilustrados

From page D1

Before, the ilustrados. Now, 'ampaw' politicians, basketball players, and movie and TV stars

Pasay, and collect the garbage. He was anchored not just on the ilustrado sybaritic world, but on the muck of the lower classes.

Not blameless

The lower classes are not blameless. They are lazy, ingratiating, slothful, even downright contemptible at times. And they collaborated with the colonizers. How else was Aguinaldo captured if not for the Macabebes whom General Funston hired as pseudo-revolutionaries? And the Sakdals, the Ganaps of 1935—they became the dreaded Makapilis of World War II who collaborated with the Japanese in their mistaken belief that the Japanese were our liberators from Western imperialism.

Alfredo is not just a writer and historian. He is also a painter and, when Solidaridad Galleries was still at M.H. del Pilar St., he exhibited his works there, much of them abstract. They were not a camouflage of an incapacity to draw, as indeed, some abstractionists do not know how to draw. He can do portraits if commissioned to do them.

His portraits of the ilustrados of the 1880s are vivid, compassionate, probing. Most of the ilustrados were mestizos. This is unavoidable for the higher one goes up, the whiter one becomes—Spanish white, not American because the Americans did not stay long enough. Most of the ilustrados were also rich—how else could they have gotten that status—going to Europe to study—if they couldn't afford it?

About a hundred photographs, very clear and carefully preserved, show the exiles at work and at play, mostly at play. Dressed in the fashion of the period, they look funny from this distance in time with their top hats, canes and capes. And there is Pedro Paterno, the dandiest of them all, in his splendid finery.

Not all of the ilustrados lived it up in Europe; as it often happened, their sustenance from families in Manila did not get to them in time. In the winter, they were miserable, without adequate heating and food. Rizal suffered not just loneliness and financial stress. Forever lecturing to his countrymen on rectitude, for all his intelligence and leadership, he was not all that well-liked. To some of the ilustrados, Europe was the good life enhanced by good food, wine and women, and the absence of that colonial disdain that they were subjected to in Filipinas.

Principalia

Some distinction though must be made between the principalia (the economic and political elite) and the ilustrados, most of them with very few exceptions like Apolinario Mabini—came from the principalia, the upper classes because they had the wherewithal to get education more than the *caton* and the *cartilla*; they were also mostly Manila-based, and had gone to Europe, particularly Spain, where they absorbed some of the liberal ideas that were then percolating in Europe.

It was also in Spain, subjected as they were to racial discrimination, that they discovered Filipinas, that they were different, for which reason they struggled to be equal with their colonizers—not free, from them. This was in the beginning.

These traumas and forms of enlightenment are narrated by Roces interestingly through anecdotes, and letters from the ilustrados themselves—a very meticulous form of storytelling and marshalling of information.

In Spain, the Indios, the Spanish *creolos*, the Chinese mestizos were bonded together by homesickness. In their parties, they ate Filipino dishes with their hands, spoke in Tagalog and, in spirit, they formed a nation. And look now at the mighty Indios, the Chinese mestizos with their billions—they have turned their backs on what their forebears did, for if at all, it is they who are responsible for much of our poverty today. They sent their money abroad, to China, to Europe, to the United States and Switzerland, money that would have developed this nation so that our poor women don't have to work abroad as domestics and prostitutes. They are now, at this very moment, the enemy of this unhappy country.

Alfredo Roces does not point this out, the difference between the ilustrados of the past and the ilustrados of today, but it is obvious to us all, even to those who do not know our pained yet heroic history.

The men who shaped Asia's first republic were men of intellect and integrity, professionals, poets, writers, orators; compare them with the modern-day ilustrados who lord it over us—the "ampaw" politicians, the basketball players, the movie and TV stars. Yes, we have a new hero in the person of Manny Pacquiao who rose from the ranks with brawn and brains. He made us all proud. But is our national pride premised merely on a boxer's heroics?

Rizal and Mabini

Rizal and Mabini loom large in this book, and rightly so for, indeed, they are the true shapers of the Filipino identity. Writes Mabini after the Revolution of 1896 had failed: "because it was badly led, because its leader won his post by reprehensible rather than meritorious acts; because instead of supporting the men most useful to the people, he made them useless out of jealousy. Identifying the aggrandizement of the people with his own, he judged the worth of men not by their ability, character and patriotism but rather by their degree of friendship and kinship with him, and anxious to secure readiness of his favorite ties to sacrifice themselves for him, he was tolerant even of their transgressions."

Sounds familiar?

The Filipino nation continues to evolve. More than a hundred years ago, the cultural elite—meaning those who excelled in Western forms of culture—were also from the economic and social elite, from the principalia. It is not so anymore—the cultural elite now includes those who came from the lower classes, as is the political elite.

To this day, too, some descendants of the ilustrados carry their Spanish lineage often with racist pride; some send their young to Spain so that they will not intermarry with Indios.

It is perhaps our misfortune that we became a state before we became a nation—a state that is now riven with corruption. Many of the ilustrados, Rizal, Mabini, Bonifacio among them, identified themselves as Filipino and, in the process, shaped the ideological boundaries of a nation that today is still in the process of birthing.

It is memory which makes a nation, and Alfredo's book reminds us of a past marred by dissension, by failures, but a past just the same worth remembering.

"Adios, Patria" should not be taken as a farewell to a dream; it should reawaken us to it instead, for it is brilliant evocation of how our forebears, many of them mestizos, contributed so much, at times with their very lives, to Filipinas.

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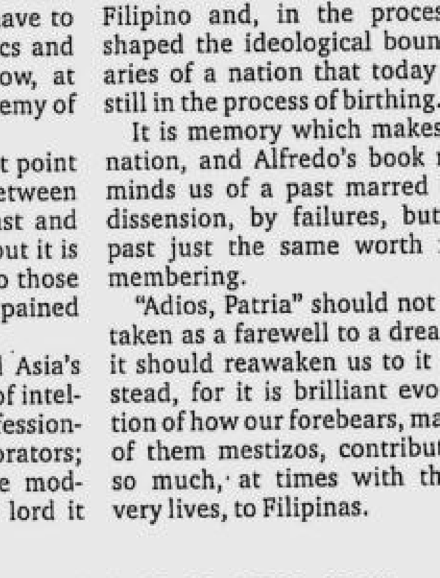
Hot summer mag



HOT SHOW-BIZ couple Claudine Barretto and Raymart Santiago graces the cover of the March issue of Metro and tells readers about their wedding preparations.

Meanwhile, Rocky Salumbides, Sam Milby, Massimiliano Cori and other hunks make up Metro's annual summer spread. There is also a 10-page spread on the best swimsuit styles.

Also in the issue: how to live with carbs in one's diet instead of giving them up altogether, the most effective acne treatments on the market, and the essential guide to bargain shopping in the city.

There's also a feature on a woman's addiction to diet pills. Meanwhile, men discuss what they really think about what women are wearing.